"THE SIN OF THE FATHER," by THOMAS P. MONTFORT WILL BEGIN NEXT WEEK

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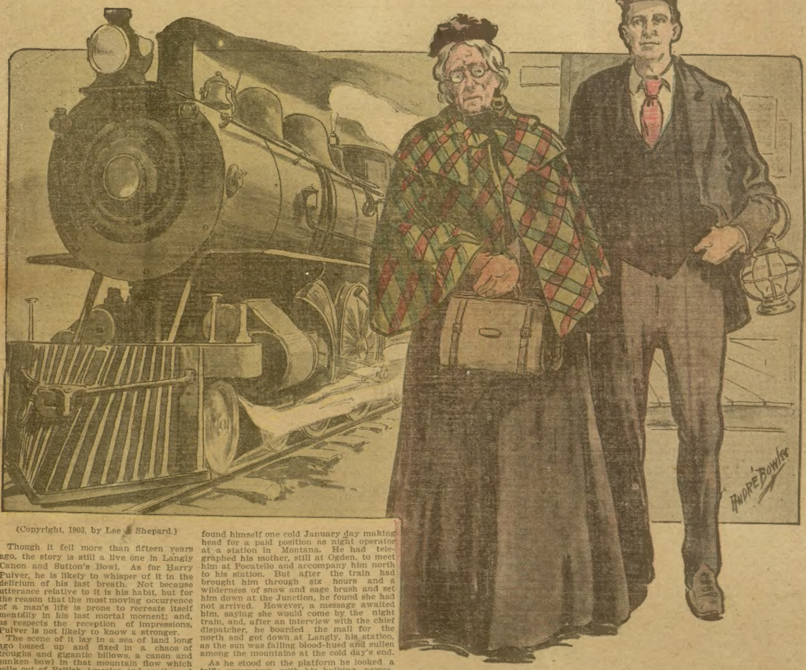
PULVER'S FIRST NIGHT;

Or, Saving the Northern Express.

By Alvah Milton Kerr.



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Though it fell more than fifteen years ago, the story is still a live one in Langly Canon and Sutton's Bowl. As for Harry Pulver, he is likely to whisper of it in the delirium of his last breath. Not because utterance relative to it is his habit, but for the reason that the most moving occurrence of a man's life is prone to recreate itself mentally in his last mortal moment; and, as respects the reception of impressions, Pulver is not likely to know a stronger.

The scene of it lay in a sea of land long ago tossed up and fixed in a chaos of troughs and gigantic billows, a canon and sunken bowl in that mountain flow which rolls out of British America and southward across Montana. The canon and bowl lay above Idaho, measuring in that mighty breadth of tipped and tumbled country as might a crack and dimple seen on the face of the moon.

Pulver himself was of New England stock. His father, an architect of some repute, had sickened with tuberculosis, and, of course, when too late, joined the colony in Colorado. At the end of a year death closed the matter for Pulver senior, and the widow and big boy, by one hazard and another, came ultimately to live in Ogden. Here the son got to school for a couple of years, following these with two or three years of desultory employment of varied sorts, ending in some months of study at telegraphy at home and further months as an unpaid "student" at a little station up in Idaho. From this station on the Oregon Short Line, which line is not at all short, young Pulver found himself one cold January day making head for a paid position as night operator at a station in Montana. He had telegraphed his mother, still at Ogden, to meet him at Pocatello and accompany him north to his station. But after the train had brought him through six hours and a wilderness of snow and sage brush and set him down at the Junction, he found she had not arrived. However, a message awaited him, saying she would come by the night train, and, after an interview with the chief dispatcher, he boarded the mail for the north and got down at Langly, his station, as the sun was falling blood-hued and sullen among the mountains at the cold day's end.

As he stood on the platform he looked a trifle overgrown, with his bulking, powerful frame and blue-eyed, boyish face. He ran his eye slowly around the horizon, narrow from encroaching mountains, gray-blue, dull, then dropped his glance to the town, a mass of houses jammed into the canon on the right-hand side of a frozen stream. A short iron bridge hung over the silent creek, and beyond it he saw a crooked street of two-story buildings, and a brick block with "Langly Bank" inscribed across the front.

The air was bitter. Everywhere pedestrians hurried, bitten and spurred [illegible] the penetrating frost. Above the town, and up on the sloping shoulders of the ridges to the left, pine forests hung in clouds, black-green and motionless against vast upsweeping fields of snow. Here and there at some distance his eye lit on gray hills of "tailings" from mines, and down from a slope a thousand feet to the westward came the muffled thunder of a forty-stamp mill running on low-grade ore.

As the train pulled out Pulver started toward the station. Near the door he met Ryder, the agent and day operator. The man's hands were full of mail and express packages, and he stared a moment at the unusual physical abundance of the new operator.

"Come in," he said, heartily. Pushing through the door, he glanced at the thermometer hanging against the jamb.

"Twenty-two below freezo," he said; "be thirty by midnight. You'll have to keep the stoves humpin' or you'll freeze tonight."

"I'm used to it," said the young giant, cheerfully; "cold weather and cold stations down in Idaho all right."

"Don't doubt it a bit," returned Ryder, throwing down the mail and small packages on the office table. "You can report Number 2 out O. T. if you will. Get y'r hand in; my fingers are about frozen. Dispatcher's call? It's P-C. Our call is L-N. Let her slide."

Pulver sat down, and, with the nervousness of a new beginner, called the dispatcher and rather bunglingly gave the train report. Ryder apparently paid no attention as he sorted over the express bills. "Better tell him y'r here and will be on hand at seven," he grunted, which showed that his trained ear had missed nothing.

Pulver acted on the suggestion. When he had finished the message the dispatcher said: "Must be cold up there; your sending sounds like you were having a chill."

"I'm scart," said Pulver, and both he and Ryder laughed.

"That's Banks; he's always funning somebody," said the latter. "Well, soon as I get these bills entered I'll take you over to the house; night man usually boards with us; hotel's bad place for a man to try to sleep during daytime."

"Thank you; yes, that's so. I'm expecting my mother up on Number 4 tonight. Perhaps you can't accommodate both of us?"

"Yes; we've got some extra room. Good idea to have your mother come. If you can rent a little house and be by yourselves you'll be sure to get sleep. When I was a night man I used to think I'd go insane sometimes for want of sleep, rooming, as most of the boys have to, at noisy boarding houses and hotels. Lots of accidents occur because night operators can't sleep during the daytime, and on that account fall asleep at night and let trains go by, and that sort of thing."

"Yes; I don't doubt it."

At seven o'clock Pulver felt responsibility descend upon him, the weighty task of preserving human lives and property. He felt it heavy and, to a degree, fearsome. Ceaseless vigilance must now meet the lurking dangers of the tracks. He promised himself to keep awake, to push back the seductive, crushing drowsiness of night, always keeping a clear mastery of himself.

At eight-fifteen a freight went north, with engine laboring against the grade and cold wheels whining around the curves. They stopped at Langly, but an order from the dispatcher, written out by Pulver, took them to Borden, fifteen miles above, for a "wild." In due time the "wild"—an engine pushing the flanger—a car rigged for cutting out and pushing back snow from the inside edge of the rails—tore by Langly, going south; then at ten-thirty the down express, with its bustle of passengers; then eleven o'clock; then the cold and brooding silence of the night.

Pulver had the big cannon stove in the passenger room, and the smaller one in the office red-hot. The telegraph instruments rattled in fits and starts. By times there was dead silence within. In these still spaces Pulver could hear the icy boards of the station platform pop with the frost, the contracted wires moaning and singing under the eaves of the building, and occasionally a curious lisping click from the stumpy steel bridge that crossed the creek.

Despite his resolution he began to feel drowsy, for he was young. There would arrive no train until two-twenty—the Northern express. A wild ore train was coming down, making for the smelting works at Salt Lake City. He had heard it reported from several stations up the track. The two trains might meet at Langly and the dispatcher need him for orders. He roused himself and got up and went out, on the platform for fresh air. He looked upward and abroad as he stood there. Stars glittered wondrously thick in the dark-blue gulf overhead; motes of frost, like floating specks of steel, glinted in the light falling from the window; the town sprawled in a gray jumble along the canon's base; the smoke from the stack of the camp mill stood up straight in the still air like a black spire, crumbling slowly at the tip. Lapping over the northern mountains like wavering tongues of flame danced the frayed ends of aurora streamers. Pulver had never seen that sort of thing before. It touched him with awe. All was silent save the muffled thunder of the distant stamps battering in their mortars.

He drew in to the light of the window and glanced at his watch. It was one o'clock. As he turned toward the door a man came swiftly across the bridge, his breath a white smoke about his face, and crossing the track and platform, pushed into the passenger room with humped shoulders, wringing hands, and all his spare frame twitching with cold. He hovered almost against the red stove, spreading his hands and gaping in wheezing puffs.

"It's awful!" he asserted. "Everything closed up over town; even the saloons are froze out, and the Marshal's gone home."

Pulver opened the door of the throbbing stove with the poker; the red glow leaped against the stranger's face, showing it thin, purple, shaggy. His eyes looked big and glassy. His shabby clothes began to smoke with the heat, and he drew back, sighing audibly as his nipped and shrunken body drank in the grateful warmth.

"Can I stay in here till morning?" he asked. "I'm out of money, a sort of—of tramp, I s'pose; but I'm not well, and when I get a job there is a—a reason why I can't keep it."

"Certainly," said Pulver, in kindly tone; "it's all right; this is a public room."

"I'm an old-time operator," said the man, "but I'm rather on the bum of late; got weak lungs, and—and I s'pose I drink too much. But my lung trouble got me into that. Wish I could quit."

"Yes," said Pulver, slowly, regarding him with a look of pity, "you ought to brace up and try to be a man again."

"I will be if—if I get a chance."

Pulver entered the office and glancing through the ticket window, saw the stranger sit down on one of the wooden settees, the back of his frowsy head against the wall, his peaked, scraggy chin in the air. A moment later sleep had lapped him in its delicious fleece.

Near two o'clock the dispatcher called Pulver and gave him an order to hold the south-bound ore train for orders, at the same time issuing an order to the conductor and engineer of the ore train to meet the Northern Express at Langly, instead of Sutton, twelve miles south. When Pulver had repeated his personal order back to the dispatcher and had received the official "O. K." he arose to turn the red light against the "wild." As he got out of his chair his face was turned toward the ticket window, and with a gasp and sudden up-flinging of his hands he staggered back almost to the wall. At the opening was a human head, the face masked with a black cloth, from which twin glittering eyes looked out through two round holes, and before which another and more appealing eye looked into Pulver's face—the inky opening in the end of a revolver barrel.

"Don't—don't shoot!" said Pulver. The words were a kind of dry whisper in his throat; his eyes were wide with terror.

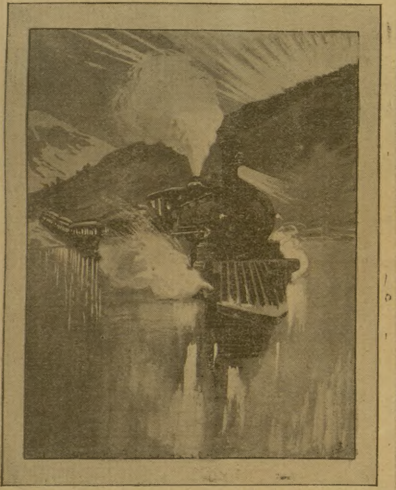
"Open the door!" came in low tones from the head.

Pulver leaped to the door, but his fingers were not yet upon the catch of the spring lock where he stopped. A sort of shiver swept him from head to foot. What was he doing? The express safe stood in a corner of the office; there was money in the ticket drawer. Was he going to yield to another without a struggle that which had been placed in his keeping? He stood wavering an instant.

"Open this, will yer?" growled the voice, now from the outer side of the door.

Pulver looked around for some object that he might lay hold of and use in defense. He stooped toward the iron poker lying by the stove, but as he bent a bullet crashed through a panel of the door, and like the rip of a hot knife cut through his left shoulder.

He straightened up with a gasp of rage, the piece of iron in his hand. He wrenched the door wide and leaped into the passenger room. The robber was there with revolver leveled. In the instant of their meeting Pulver noted that the man was rather short in stature, but strongly fashioned; that a long coat covered him to the knees, with a fur cap pulled down solidly over his head, and that the black cloth mask blew out from his mouth with sudden, startled breath. The thought had flown through Pulver's mind that this visitor would turn out to be the vagrant operator, but he was in error, for with the moment of Pulver's rush from the door the tramp rose from crouching behind the stove and leaped upon the back of the intruder, bringing his bony red wrists across the man's throat in a strangling clasp. The robber whirled and flung him off, and whipping the revolver around, fired. In the spurt of flame Pulver saw the tramp's horrified face gleam out, pitted and wrinkled with pain, as, whirling with the shock of the bullet, he rolled against the legs of one of the settees, a crumpled, motionless shape.



Out the train went crashing and thundering over the siding upon the field of ice

Pulver's jaw dropped as he looked at the broken figure. Then his teeth came together with a snap as he turned on the murderer. The barrel of the pistol was almost in his face, but he struck it aside and hurled the robber back, and, rushing in, struck with the iron rod with all his might.

A bolt of lightning had been hardly more destructive. The man doubled under the blow and sank to the floor.

Pulver sprang back and stood teetering unevenly on the balls of his feet. No thought of the signal that should be turned against the wild ore train touched his mind. He had killed a man! The lights, the walls of the room, the stove, the most familiar things, looked strange. He turned about with heaving bosom and involuntarily ran into the office. As he crossed the threshold, the door leading into the big freight room opened suddenly and two men met him face to face. As with the first intruder, these two were masked with black face-cloths, and each wore a long coat. They were large men, and the excited glitter of their eyes in the holes of their masks was something grewsome and inhuman. Each held a pistol before him.

Unconsciously Pulver crouched down and backward, his hands quivering before his face, his lips opening with a cry.

"Hand me y'r keys!" demanded the taller of the two men; "shell 'em out quick!" He advanced on Pulver with gleaming eyes and pistol presented.

Had the men been habited in every-day dress, with uncovered faces, it is possible Pulver would have submitted. Appearing monstrous, evil and strange, as they did, he instinctively felt that frenzied impulse to destroy them which one sometimes has when confronted by a poisonous reptile. From his cowering, crouching posture he leaped straight at the man's head. The leveled pistol exploded, but Pulver felt nothing; evidently the weapon was deflected by his swift movement; but the robber's hat and mask came off in Pulver's clutch and his dark head came forward nearly to the floor. To save himself from falling he rushed forward and Pulver struck madly at the exposed back of his neck as he passed, but missed his aim. Instantly the man righted himself and cocked the pistol, but his companion was pushing in, hoarsely crying: "Don't shoot! Hold y'r fire, Bill! Some of the town folks'll be in here first thing ye know!" In the same breath he clasped Pulver about the body, pinioning the big youth's arms underneath, but with a quick surge the young fellow burst the man's hold and flung him backward against the wall and struck at his eyes with all his might. His fist fell on the intruder's chest like a descending maul and sent a gasping grunt from his lips, but the taller robber had rendered the blow abortive Catching Pulver about the ankles in the moment of his forward swing, he had jerked the youth's feet back, and Pulver, spinning around, crashed upon the floor In a twinkling the two men leaped upon him, fairly crushing out his breath.

"Don't kill him, Bill; get the gag in his mouth!" panted the shorter man.

Pulver, dazed and stunned, was trying to struggle. He felt something crushed into his mouth, stifling, terrible. All the blood of his veins seemed boiling up and booming inside his skull. Strangely, in that moment of mental dimness and agony, he thought of his mother hastening toward him on the imperiled express; of the ore "wild" which must soon pass the station going southward to crash into her train; of the dispatcher's order to hold the "wild" until the express should arrive.

In the terror of the thought, in the maddening vision of wreck that swept through his mind, he got up with the two men hanging to him. Together they crashed back and forth across the little room, crushing the chairs, jostling against the stove, hurtling against the walls, with Pulver trying insanely to get to the signal lever. He could not speak for the choking thing tied in place with a knot at the back of his neck that filled his mouth; each of the robbers had him gripped fast by a wrist; he felt his heart would burst.

By times he carried his assailants nearly to the signal lever; his arms seemed being torn from their sockets. If he could but breathe freely! If he could only tell them! As he plunged and struggled the taller man snatched one of the revolvers from the floor. "Don't kill him, Bill; he's got to open the safe!" gulped the other between laboring breaths. "Look out!" Pulver had wrenched his right hand loose and had caught the taller man by the throat, bearing him backward toward the lever, but the pistol-butt suddenly came down upon the young fellow's head, sickening, deadly. Involuntarily they let go of him, and he staggered back and fell in pitiful fashion near the inner partition.

For a moment he lay quivering, his eyes upturned and twitching, then suddenly he grew still and looked straight at the men. The pupils of his eyes were dilated, and, though he stared hard at them, he seemed gazing at something far away. An instant later he bounded up like a steel spring released and sprung through the door into the freight room. He went over the boxes and barrels like a flying deer, and burst out upon the platform through the half-opened door at the south end of the great room. His dumfounded assailants plunged after him, but he fled down the track like a melting shadow. In his semi-delirium of mind he recognized and heeded but one thing: up from the south, a dozen miles away, he seemed to see the express rushing toward him like a burning star. He was to meet and stop it.

As he flew along the track he tore the stifling gag from his mouth and the bitter air came into his throat like ice. At the south end of the switches, an eighth of a mile from the station, he came upon a hand-car standing on the rails. With a cry he stopped abruptly. From somewhere back in the gray darkness came the sound of running feet. He gave thte car a push, sprang upon it, and threw his weight upon the handlebar. The whels began to burr and hum; the dull blur in his brain faded away, and in its stead came a keen, painful, burning activity of mind, abnormal and strange, for by nature he was big and slow.

This car was the means by which the robbers had come to Langly, he told himself, and the means by which they had hoped to escape. They had stolen it from the section house, probably at Sutton. Some of the section men's tools were still on the car; he felt them under his feet Suddenly he threw back his head with a cry of joy. The switch and ice house down at the marge of Sutton Lake! He had remarked them as he came up on the mail. If he could but gain the switch and throw it. With something like madness he poured all his great strength into the wheels, and the car went humming down the long, sinuous grade, through the echoing groove of the canon.

Up near Langly Station his two pursuers had stopped. Pantingly the shorter one looked up toward the sky. Throbbing up the northern heaven and pulsing into the incomparable dome flowed the filmy, ghostly streamers of the aurora. By times these burned red through all their gauzy webs, again died away pale and flickering, then gushed upward, radiant, indescribable.

"Look at that, Bill!" whispered the one who first saw the vision.

The other looked and ended the stare with an oath. "It's nothing but Northern Lights!" he growled, but his bravado had in it a note of awe. "Let's get the ticket money and skip," he said. "Where do yeh s'pose Jim is? Heard 'im shoot, but seen nothing of 'im since."

"Don't know. Listen! There's a train comin' from the north! Let's get out of this, Bill!" They ran across the tracks and entering a road that bordered the ridges, disappeared in the gloom.

Truly a train was coming. Down the main defile, roaring through the silence of the night, came the ore "wild." Inside the station a poor soul was making life's last effort—a supreme struggle to do a deed worthy of man. Inch by inch, foot by foot, the tramp operator was dragging himself toward the signal lever. He had heard the dispatcher's order to Pulver, and now the roar of the approaching train came to his dulling ears. "Brace up and be a man; that's what he said," whispered the crawling figure. A red trail marked his progress. He was almost to the signal when the train burst across the switches, but gripped with mortal injury he tried in vain to lift himself to the lever. Again and again his trembling hands crept up the wall as he lay upon the floor, but each time slipped quivering down, and the "wild" went by, battering and pounding through a billow of clamoring sounds. To the man on the floor its roar was faint and far off, like the dreamy noise of falling waters. "Brace up—and—be—a—man," he breathed, trying to get his stiffening hands above the baseboard of the room; then, closing his fingers as if clutching the lever, he sighed and trembled and fell eternally still.

The engineer of the "wild" pushed back the frosted window of the cab and looked up at the signal as they flew by. The green light was on; the windows of the station were white with frost. He opened the throttle a notch wider, making for the meeting point with the express at Sutton. He had feared he would find the red light turned against him, but now it was all right; they would reach home and wife and child the quicker at the distant division station. Thus with its crew ignorant of the tragedy and impending catastrophe the night held, the train went pouring down Langly Canon after Pulver.

Poor fellow! As hard as man ever strove Pulver strove. Above him raced a glimmering storm of stars tangled with waving ribbons of the aurora; by him flashed the whirling walls of the canon—here snow-covered, bulging masses of stone, there streaked with black torrent of spruce and pine. He heard nothing save the noise of the car and the turmoil of his breath and blood in their labor, but he felt the ore train behind him. How soon would it overtake him? How soon would he plunge into the rushing front of the express? Would he be crushed between the trains? The questions were like spurting flames in his brain. He must now be half-way to the switch; it was five miles from Langly. His breath came hoarse and panting; he was dizzy with the swift rise and fall of his head above the working-bar; his throat was dry—and the icy air burned in it like fire. But onward and onward he flew, a disheveled figure, in his breast a tempest of haste.

He did not know just where the switch was, and he feared he might pass it, for all things glimmered about him; but it must be ahead, and he still drove down and lifted up the working-bar with all his power, praying God for help. Would the curves and windings of the track never cease? Was there no end? Ah, here it was—the long, black bulk of the ice house stretching along the shore, and the broad steel-gray mirror of the frozen lake with the reflected aurora dabbling it as with fire. He set his foot on the brake and reversed his push and pull on the bar. As the car stopped he leaped off, and, catching it by the hand-grips, threw the machine around and clear of the rails, then, half insane and laboring for breath, he rushed to the switch.

In a moment he was on his knees in the snow tearing wildly at the lock. How would he get it unfastened? He had no key. From southward came the dull roar of the express, following the long curve of the shore, and down Langly Canon came the muffled thunder of the hastening ore train. They would crash together before his eyes!

From his lips burst a wild prayer, mingling the names of mother and God.

He glanced around at the impassive world imploringly, but the cold stars, the frozen lake, the black torrents of pines on the mountain sides offered him nothing. Help came from within, or did that thought drop down from beyond the stars? With a cry he bounded over to the half-inverted car, and, raking his fingers through the snow, found a track-wrench. Springing back to the switch he thrust the handle of the wrench through the clutch of the lock and tore the mechanism in pieces. Wrenching the shattered parts away, he pulled the pin and threw his shoulder against the lever. But it would not yield.

Then arrived the moment when he was as one who had ceased to be of mortal strength. A kind of insanity of power came upon him. The siding was covered with snow, the sides of the switch were clogged with frost, yet little by little he drove the lever around, hearing his tendons tear, his joints grind and crack, and seeing all the air grow full of rolling disks of red, while nearer and nearer swept the clamor of steam and wheels from the south, and down Langly Gorge rolled an increasing thunder.

Wildly crushing his breast and shoulders against the lever, he heaved and strained and struck it great blows with the full weight of his body, crying out gaspingly to his Maker. The express seemed not fifty feet away when the lever came around to the pinhole and he thrust the iron in. Terrible and mighty the engine burst upon him, whirling its string of lighted coaches along the rails. With a deafening crunch of frost, a roar of the whistle for brakes, and the chug and tearing of reversed drivers, the train swept, curving and rocking, upon the siding. There would be no cars there for loading until June; the ice was thirty inches thick; on the morrow men would begin cutting. It was delightful destiny.

Out the train went crashing and thundering over the end of the empty siding and swept upon the field of ice. From the wheels spurted a showering sheet of white; a cloud of steam burst up about the engine from the firebox; then the train stopped, a hundred feet from shore, but as secure as if standing upon a floor of armor-plate.

Passengers and crew swarmed down upon the solid blue field and there was shouting and dismay. No man could understand it, but a glimmer of the night's tragedy dawned upon the conductor and others when they turned back to the switch and found a young fellow, battered and bleeding, lying insensible at the base of the target. Five hundred feet southward stood the ore "wild."

"Who is he, anyway?" cried the conductor. "Great Scott! what a close call for us!" He was kneeling in the snow and had Pulver's battered head on his breast.

"Let me get to the signal! Throw the red light for the 'wild!'" suddenly shouted Pulver, leaping to his feet.

Despite the strong hands that were upon him he stripped himself loose. Then he stopped and looked around curiously—a wounded, pitiful figure. He saw the passenger train, lighted and glowing, standing out on the aurora-tinted mirror of ice, he heard the ore "wild" backing up to give assistance, then suddenly a little woman came from the crowd and put her arms about him with a tender cry, and gazing down upon her face, he said, "Mother!" and burst into laughing tears.

Note—The above remarkable story is printed here by permission of the publishers of the book, "Young Heroes of Wire and Rail," by Alvah Milton Kerr, the well-known writer of stories of railroad life. The book contains nineteen stories of great power and originality, dealing with heroism and perilous situations in American railroad work. The book contains 382 pages and is finely illustrated and beautifully made. If you wish to be thrilled and fascinated we advise you to send for the volume. Price, $1.00 at book stores; $1.12, postage paid, from publishers. Address Lee & Shepard, 202 Devonshire street, Boston, Mass.

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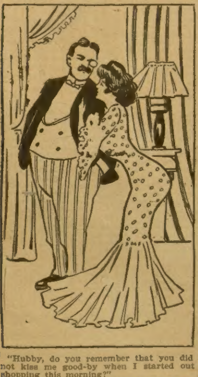

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"No; but I remember that I kissed my money good-by."

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He Was No Mark.

"Yes, sir," says the genial hardware man, "I am letting you have that gun at a fair price."

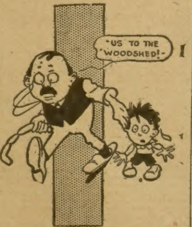
"It seems a little high to me," argued the customer. "I had an idea a gun like this ought to be cheaper."

"Oh!" smiles the genial hardware man, "I would not dare to overcharge you for the gun. If I did, the gun might kick."

Even while the hardware man was in the midst of his laughter, the customer exploded:

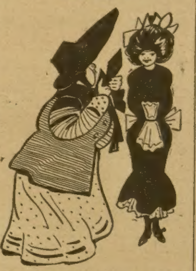
"Huh! If you overcharged me, I think I'd be the one to kick."

Perilous.



"A WHALING EXPEDITION."

All the Same.



"Mrs. Brown called while you were out, ma'am."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. I'd have been out even if I'd been in."

Poor Girl.

Miss Gold—I hear that the foreign noblemen are demanding that the American girls they wish to marry must have more income than ever.

Miss Gilt (discouraged)—Gracious! The necessities of life are going up every day.

Very Little.

Magistrate—Did I understand you to say the prisoner offered resistance when you attempted to place him under arrest? ?

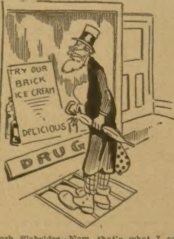
Policeman—None worth mentioning, your honor. Only a couple of dollars.

Almost a Blunder.

Clara—Did you lose your presence of mind when he attempted to kiss you?

Maud—Yes, for a moment. Why, I came near telling him to stop.

Plain Case.


TRY OUR BRICK ICE CREAM
DELICIOUS
DRUG

Josh Slabsides—Now, that's what I call bunko right on the face of it.

THE DEATH DIAMONDS;

or, Mercy Compton's Fate.

By EMMA HOWARD WIGHT.

Begun in No. 39, Sept. 26. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be procured from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"Julian Merrill, Doctor Merrill's brother!" I exclaimed. It seemed to me well-nigh impossible for two men so utterly unlike to be brothers. Perhaps he read something of my thoughts, for he smiled a little as he continued:

"They told me across the way that my brother had been married this afternoon." No doubt he thought me awkward and stupid as I still stared at him in silence. "I went to my brother's home in Boston and there learned that he was in Virginia. I have been traveling for the last three years. Will you kindly inform me whom my brother has married?"

"He married my mother," I replied.

Despite all my efforts at self-control something of the desolation at my heart must have crept into my voice, for he gave me a quick look of compassion.

"I was very much surprised when I learned that my brother was married," he said. "He rarely sought the society of ladies save professionally. Pardon me, I am naturally curious to know something of the lady he has married. Do you resemble your mother?"

"Not in the least," I replied, quickly. "My mother is very beautiful."

He smiled as he looked at me with a deepening of the interest I had noted in his eyes from the first.

"My brother is indeed to be congratulated," he said. "He is not exactly the sort of man whom women in general find attractive."

My eyes fell and I felt the blood mount to my cheeks. Did he really believe that my mother had married his brother for love, and, if so, how long would it be before he discovered the truth? The thought that this man, with his kingly bearing, might despise my mother for what she had done carried with it a sting. I was very young and inexperienced and it seemed to me a noble mind must accompany such magnificent physical attributes.

After a moment, however, I drew myself up proudly and looked at him with something like defiance. After all, why should I care what he thought? Besides, Gypsy said it was a very common thing, indeed, for women to marry for money. No one thought any the worse of them for so doing, and if Doctor Merrill were content, surely no one else had a right to find fault or criticise. My mother had often told me that I was odd, different from other people in my way of looking at things, and no doubt she was right.

"Gypsy will be here in a little while," I said. "She has gone to the station. May I offer you something in the way of refreshment?"

"Thank you, no," he replied. "Will you tell me your name?" he added, with that wonderful smile which lighted his blonde face into such rare beauty.

"My name is Compton, Mercy Compton."

"Mercy," he repeated, softly, and my heart beat a little quicker, for it seemed to me that no one had ever spoken my name as he did before.

There was the sound of carriage wheels on the drive outside.

"Here is Gypsy," I said, and a moment later Gypsy entered.

She ran quickly up to where Julian Merrill and I stood in the crimson glow from the setting sun.

"Uncle Julian!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide with astonishment. He laughed as he bent his tall, blonde head and kissed her.

"So you have not forgotten me, Gypsy?" he said.

"Of course not," replied Gypsy, with dignity. "I am sure three years are not such an age, and I was no baby when you went away. If you had come a little sooner you would have been in time for the wedding," and she gave a little laugh. "Papa is married. Did Mercy tell you?"

"Yes," he replied. "I was very much surprised."

"Of course you were. No one thought that papa would marry again. And, just fancy it, Julian, he is desperately in love. But she is just lovely. I do want you to see her. I am very fond of her and I don't mind having a step-mother one bit. Mercy and I are going to Boston tomorrow. Will you come, too?"

"Of course," he replied. "I ran down to see your father, intending to return to Boston in a few days. I have had enough of wandering for some time to come."

The sunset glow suddenly died out, leaving us standing in the gray of the twilight.

"I will go for a light," I said.

"Oh, never mind!" exclaimed Gypsy; "we will go right on over. Come along, Uncle Julian; come, Mercy."

I drew quickly back.

"I cannot come with you now," I said. "I will come later."

"All right," murmured Gypsy, carelessly.

Julian Merrill lingered a moment as though he would speak, then he allowed Gypsy to draw him from the room.

"Thar now, honey, chile, bid yo' ole mammy good night. 'Tain't good-by; fo' I'se gwine to see ye ag'in in de mo'nin'."

Mammy's voice was tremulous and the tears were stealing down her dusky cheeks. The old-fashioned clock in the kitchen corner had just struck ten. I stood with my hands clinging about her arm.

"Run 'long, now, honey," she continued. "The dew am fallin' and it am gittin' late. I gwine to stan' heah at de do' till yo' safe in de house."

She drew me gently to the door. I put my arms about her for a moment, then I turned away. Slowly I crossed the turnpike and passed up the walk under the heavy darkness cast by the oaks. I shivered in the chill air and my hair was damp with the dew.

A man was walking back and forth the wide portico, a cigar between his lips. As I wearily ascended the steps, he threw away his cigar and came forward.

"Is it you at last, my yellow-haired Mercy?" he said. "You should not be out in the dew and the night air in that thin dress. Gypsy has gone to bed. Come in," and he laid his hand gently upon my arm.

At his touch the stony composure which had upheld me all day seemed to give away. My head fell against his shoulder and I burst into passionate weeping. They were the first tears I had shed since my mother told me she was going to marry Doctor Merrill.

Julian Merrill drew me gently to him and smoothed my hair.

"Poor child!" he murmured, and I felt strangely soothed and comforted.

CHAPTER IV.

Four months had passed. It seemed a long time to me since that October morning when I sat at the car window straining my eyes to catch a last glimpse of poor old Mammy and Uncle Zach. Julian Merrill seemed to understand just how I felt and he had been so kind. Gypsy thought me very foolish and said so.

"You ought to be glad to get away from such a deadly dull life, Mercy, instead of grieving and moping," she declared. "And I cannot understand your being so fond of those two old black people."

But the dear old life had never seemed "deadly dull" to me and it was some time before I grew accustomed to the new one. It did not appeal to me because I cared very little for money or luxury or elegance. Doctor Merrill was very kind to me. He faithfully kept his word that I should be his daughter and Gypsy's sister, and I often reproached myself that I did not care for him more. But I could not, there were times when the old repulsion would sweep over me and I would shrink shuddering from his very touch. With his brother it was very different. The mere sound of his footstep had power to make my heart beat quicker with joy.

We saw a great deal of Julian Merrill. He did not live in Doctor Merrill's luxurious house on Beacon street; but he had apartments in a hotel near by. Doctor Merrill rarely went into society and Julian became my mother's escort to the fashionable gatherings to which she went night after night. She was wondrously lovely in her costly gowns and the jewels which her husband showered upon her, and I could not but acknowledge to myself that it was the life for which she was made. Of her husband she saw very little, but he never complained; he permitted her to have her will in all things, and, though I felt sure that his love for her was deep and passionate, he did not obtrude it upon her. At all events, he had known from the first that she did not love him. She had never tried to deceive him; indeed, it had always appeared to me that it would have been a rather difficult undertaking to deceive Doctor Merrill about anything. It almost seemed to me that those somber, piercing eyes of his could look right through one and read his inmost thoughts.

It was a cold morning in February when I went into my mother's dressing room. She was lying upon a couch piled with pink silk pillows, in a loose dressing gown of white India silk, with all her glittering hair loose. She had a cup half filled with chocolate in her hand which she placed on a small inlaid table at her elbow as I entered.

Though she had not gotten to bed until four o'clock that morning her flowery face showed no signs of fatigue. Indeed, I had never seen her look lovelier. Her cheeks were deeply pink, her eyes were shining with a soft brilliancy.

I bent over and kissed her, then sat down on the floor beside the couch. She began abstractedly twining my yellow hair about her white slender fingers which were all aglitter with diamonds. After a little while I asked her if she had enjoyed herself the previous evening. She had attended a ball, one of the most brilliant of the season, and Julian had accompanied her.

"I never was so happy in all my life before," she answered, and a dreamy smile crept about her beautiful lips.

"I am glad you enjoyed it," I said. "Gypsy said it would be a very splendid affair. I am sure of one thing, that there was no one there so beautiful as you, mother."

She laughed softly.

"What a little flatterer you are, Mercy," she murmured.

At that moment the door opened and Doctor Merrill entered, carrying in his hand a square box daintily done up in white tissue paper. My mother looked up with a slight elevation of her brows. I knew it was an unusual thing for her husband to seek her in her dressing room at that hour in the morning.

I arose to my feet to leave the room, but Doctor Merrill lifted his hand detainingly.

"Do not go," he said, "I shall only remain a few minutes." Then he turned to my mother and laid the box on the couch beside her. "I took this from the servant just outside the door as I was about to enter," he added.

My mother arose to a sitting position and began undoing the wrappings. Doctor Merrill stood quietly watching her, one perfect hand resting lightly against the rose-colored pillow. Those beautiful hands of his had always struck me as an incongruity. I glanced up into his face. In the bright light it seemed to me that it was even more pallid than usual.

My mother lifted the lid from the box. It contained about a dozen perfect Jacqueminot roses, vividly crimson and exquisitely fragrant.

"The sender has forgotten to enclose his card," remarked Doctor Merrill, quietly.

"The roses came from Julian," said my mother. "I mentioned to him that today was my birthday, and he said he would send me some roses."

"It is, indeed!" exclaimed Doctor Merrill. "You should have told me of it so that I might have had my gift ready. But it is not too late. You shall have it this evening."

"It really does not matter," murmured my mother, indifferently. "You are always giving me something."

"Julian's flowers are very pretty," said Doctor Merrill, "but I shall take advantage of my prerogative as a husband and bring you a rare and costly gift."

As he spoke, he bent over and kissed her upon the lips. My mother, evidently taken by surprise, recoiled with a little cry of distaste. I looked quickly and apprehensively at Doctor Merrill. But his dark face was imperturbable. And yet I felt convinced that it was the first time my mother had openly shown any aversion for him or repulsed him.

"I shall probably be away until evening," he said, as he passed out.

My mother lifted her handkerchief to her lips.

"Oh, that kiss sickened me!" she exclaimed. Then, as she caught sight of my troubled face, she laughed. "Don't look so shocked, Mercy," she exclaimed. "I really do not know what possessed Doctor Merrill. He is not given to being demonstrative, especially before others. Now, go away, child. I must dress. I have an engagement at Madame Felico's at eleven. Ring the bell for Hortense, Mercy."

CHAPTER V.

"Madame is perfect! She is ravishing!" cried my mother's French maid, as she stepped back after putting the finishing touches to her mistress' toilet. Her expressions of admiration were not extravagant, for my mother looked exquisitely beautiful. Her gown was a heavy white satin trimmed with costly lace and pearl embroidery. Her lovely shoulders and arms were bare. A diamond star glittered in her bronze brown hair, a butterfly of emeralds and diamonds was perched upon one white shoulder, the girdle of pearls about her waist was fastened with a diamond clasp. And upon her breast, the one spot of coloring burning luridly among all that shimmering whiteness, was a cluster of red roses, the same roses that Julian Merrill had sent her that morning. To me they seemed out of harmony, almost bizarre, and I said something to that effect. "I did tell to madame ze same thing," exclaimed Hortense. "Madame need no roses, but even if they was cream or white or pink or yellow, but ze red, they do not fit with—what you call it? Accord with madame's toilet. But madame, she insist, she will have ze red roses," and Hortense shrugged her shoulders expressively.

"Since that be the case, let us say no more about them." My mother spoke a trifle impatiently and I saw her flush as she had a way of doing when annoyed.

At that moment there was a knock upon the door and Hortense went to answer it.

"Ze doctare, madam," she announced, and my mother turned as her husband entered.

He carried in his hand a small jewel case.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I am just in time." He held out the case to my mother, adding, "You must wear it this evening."

My mother lifted the lid. Upon a bed of rose satin lay a necklace of diamonds. The French maid uttered a cry of admiration. My mother's soft brown eyes were radiant. She was passionately fond of jewels and certainly the stones composing the necklace were of wondrous beauty and brilliancy.

"Let me put it on your neck," said Doctor Merrill," and he leaned forward and lifted the necklace from the case. My mother bent toward him, and I watched with a sort of fascination his slender, womanish fingers as they hovered for a moment about her white throat. Then he drew back and my mother turned to the glass.

"The diamonds are superb," she said. "How good of you to buy me so costly a birthday gift."

At that moment Gypsy came bounding into the room.

"Mamma, Uncle Julian has come!" she cried. Then she drew a long breath. "Oh! how beautiful you do look! And that necklace! Where did you get it, mamma?"

"Your papa has just made me a present of it," answered my mother. She was gathering up her fan and gloves from the toilet table and she appeared suddenly to have grown nervous and abstracted.

"Papa, will you buy me diamonds when I am old enough to wear them?" asked Gypsy. "I do love them so." She was standing close beside my mother, and, as she spoke, she lifted her hand to touch caressingly the necklace.

Doctor Merrill put out his hand and drew her quickly, almost roughly, back. As Gypsy looked up in surprise, he said, hurriedly:

"You were crushing your mother's dress."

With his hand resting lightly upon her shoulder he led her from the room.

"Good night, pretty mamma," cried Gypsy as she passed out.

I took my mother's wrap of rose-colored velvet from the maid.

"You need not come, Hortense," I said.

Half-way down the richly carpeted stairway my mother paused suddenly. I glanced over her shoulder and saw Julian Merrill standing at the foot of the stairs. The memory of him, as he stood there, with the light of his kingly head, his blonde face, with a strange, passionate eagerness in the superb eyes, uplifted toward us, was destined to return to me in after years in a moment of unspeakable anguish.

My mother turned and took her wrap from my arm. Then she bent and kissed me.

"Go back, Mercy," she said. "Good night."

"Oh, mother! mother!"

I am a gray-haired old woman now, but every incident of that dreadful night is as distinct in my memory as though it were but yesterday. Two hours after she had left the house, radiantly beautiful, and apparently in perfect health, my mother was brought back dying. Some mysterious illness had seized her which grew every moment more severe.

I crouched down beside the bed, upon which they had laid her, in her gleaming white draperies and flashing jewels, mute and cold and dazed. The petals from the faded roses on her breast fell upon my head like huge drops of blood.

She looked up at Doctor Merrill, who stood beside the bed with dilated eyes in which there was a look of anguish, fear and dread.

"John, is this death?" she asked.

He bowed his head, but he did not speak. It seemed to me that he stood there like a thing of stone or marble.

Some one broke into wild sobs; it was Gypsy. A man's tall form turned from the bed and passed swiftly from the room; it was Julian Merrill. I dragged myself to Doctor Merrill's feet and clasped him about the knees, lifting my face to his.

"Save her! save my mother!" I cried.

Then he spoke:

"I can do nothing."

My arms relaxed. I fell upon my face at his feet. There was blackness all about me.

"Mercy!"

That voice seemed to bring me back from the borders of oblivion. I groped my way to the bed and then the blackness lifted and I saw my mother's face with a gray shadow settling over it while the diamonds about her throat looked like a circle of fire.

"Mercy, pray," she whisered. "Mercy——"

Again that black shadow came between me and the light, shutting out the dead face on the pillow.

When I awoke to consciousness once more I lifted my heavy eyes and looked wonderingly up into Mammy's dusky face.

"Mammy!" I whispered.

"Ya'as, honey, it's yo' po' ole Mammy," she answered; "and she thanks de good Lawd dat you done knows her at last."

I tried to lift my hand, but it fell back upon the coverlet.

"What is the matter with me, Mammy?" I asked. "And when did you come? I—I can't remember."

"Don't you try to 'member nuffin, chile," said Mammy, with decision. "You jest drink dis heah and go to sleep."

I obediently drank the contents of the glass she held to my lips and almost as soon as she laid me back upon the pillow I was asleep. I grew rapidly stronger after that, though I had no desire to live, and felt almost resentful toward Doctor Merrill, to whose skill and untiring care they told me I owed my life.

"Why did you not let me die?" I said to him one day as he stood beside my bed. "It would have been kinder. I have lost all that made life dear. I have no desire to live.

"You think so now," he answered, quietly, "but those feelings will pass away. You are very young and life holds much happiness for you, I am sure."

I turned my head wearily away. After a moment or so he spoke again.

"As soon as you are strong enough, we will go abroad, you, Gypsy, and myself. Change of scene will do wonders for you."

"You are very kind," I answered, "but I cannot go with you. I have no claim upon you, Doctor Merrill, and I am going back to Shenandoah to live. The place will yield me more than enough to live on."

"This is sheer folly, a mere sick fancy," he said. "You know very well that I look on you as my daughter. I intend dividing my money equally between you and Gypsy. But we will not speak of this now; we will wait until you are stronger. Then you will look at the matter very differently."

I did not contradict him, but my resolution was not in the least shaken. It was two weeks later before he again broached the subject. I was strong enough to be about then and we were alone together in Doctor Merrill's study. I quietly reiterated what I had said before and when he realized that I was not to be turned from my purpose, his chagrin and annoyance were unmistakable. Indeed, I was surprised to find that he felt so deeply about the matter.

When he had left me I sank back wearily into my chair. I was still far from strong and the interview had exhausted me. I fell asleep from sheer weakness and awoke to find Julian Merrill standing beside me, looking down upon me with a look of unspeakable compassion in his eyes. The last time I had seen him he was standing at the foot of my mother's bed with a white look of horror upon his face. As I gazed up at him I saw that he was very much changed; he was pale and worn and haggard.

He stood gazing down on me for a moment or so in silence with that look—it was something more than mere pity—deepening in his eyes. Then he suddenly sank upon his knees beside the chair and took my hand gently in his.

"Mercy, my poor child, how you have suffered!" he murmured.

"Suffered?" I repeated. "Ah, yes, I have indeed suffered very much. I wanted to die but they would not let me. It was cruel, for I have nothing to live for, now that she has gone, my mother, my beautiful mother!"

For a moment it seemed as though he shrank from me, and I heard him draw a quick breath. The next moment he drew my head gently to his shoulder and his hand lingered caressingly upon my hair. I lay very still, the yellow wealth of my hair sweeping over his arm and breast. His touch had a strange power to soothe me. A feeling of rest, almost of peace, stole over me. Then he spoke and his words aroused me to a renewed sense of pain and desolation.

"Mercy, I have come to bid you goodby," he said.

"You—you are going away?" I faltered.

"Yes; I am going away," he answered, a strange ring of passionate pain in his voice. "This place has grown hateful, intolerable to me. I must go and at once." He suddenly checked himself as I looked up at him in involuntary surprise. "You know I have always been something of a wanderer," he added, more quietly.

"But you will come back again?" I murmured.

It was a moment or two before he answered:

"Yes; I shall come back again some day, I suppose," he said at length, wearily.

CHAPTER VI.

I stood at the kitchen door looking out at the warm loveliness of the June day, with its riot of blooming roses, orange blossoms and honeysuckle weighting the air with their mingled perfume. It seemed to me that no other summer had ever produced such a rich luxuriance of bloom.

"Mammy," I said, glancing over my shoulder into the kitchen to where Mammy stood beating up eggs at the dresser, "do you know that I am nineteen years old today?"

"Ob co'se I knows it, honey," replied Mammy, looking rather aggrieved at the question. "'Tain't noways lakly dat I gwine to fo'git when I 'members lak it war yest'day de day you war borned. De po' young mistis, she smiled faint lak when I done showed her de baby. De good Lawd knows she look lak a chile herse'f lyin' thar so pale and pooty. It war hard to beliebe dat she had a baby ob her own. I reckon I do know dat dis yo' burfday, chile. What is I makin' dis heah cake fo', I lak ye to tell me?"

A mingled feeling of sadness and bitterness stole over me. There was no one to remember my birthday save this poor, faithful old darkey. I seemed to realize for the first time how utterly alone I was.

Doctor Merrill and Gypsy were still abroad. Her father was in very bad health; indeed, he had never been the same man since my mother's death, Gypsy wrote me, and he had entirely given up practicing. In all these four years I had heard nothing of Julian Merrill. It seemed that Doctor Merrill himself knew nothing of his whereabouts.

Mammy had finished mixing her cake and placed it in the oven. Then she came and stood beside me in the doorway.

"What you studyin' 'bout, honey?" she asked.

"I was thinking just then of Doctor Merrill and Gypsy and Doctor Merrill's brother," I replied.

"And befo'' de Lawd, ef thar ain't de young missy a-comin' 'crost de pike now!" cried Mammy.

I turned quickly, incredulously. A dainty figure, crowned with dusky curling hair, was indeed coming across the turnpike. Taller than when I had last seen her and with skirts almost to the ground, but unmistakably Gypsy.

With a low exclamation, I ran forward and opened the little gate leading out upon the turnpike.

Gypsy bounded forward and threw herself upon me in her old impetuous way.

"Mercy, you dear old darling!" she cried.

I held her close and kissed her. I felt that I had never known before how fond I was of pretty, childish Gypsy.

"Gypsy, this is a delightful surprise," I said. "When did you arrive?"

"Late last evening," she replied. "Papa wanted to telegraph you from Boston, but I wouldn't let him; I wanted to surprise you. He made up his mind very suddenly to return to America. I fear he is very ill, Mercy," the bright, sunshiny face clouded for a moment. "You'll be shocked when you see him; he's so changed."

"I am very sorry," I murmured.

"He must have been awfully fond of your mother, Mercy," Gypsy continued. "I believe it's grieving about her that's ruined his health."

Then the momentary shadow was gone from her face and she was holding me off, gazing upon me with approving eyes.

"Do you know, Mercy Compton, that you have grown simply lovely?" she exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" I retorted.

"But you have, indeed. I wish those artists in Rome, who called me picturesque, could see you. They would simply rave over those big, serious gray eyes of yours, that magnolia skin, and all that yellow hair. And you carry yourself like a queen. And now what do you think of me? I am quite grown up, if you please, over sixteen."

"Well, you certainly haven't gone off any in looks," I replied, with a smile.

She was, in fact, distractingly pretty. She was not tall, her head just reached to my shoulder, but her figure was rounded and dainty. She had the same peachy cheeks, red, laughing lips and brilliant eyes. Her curls were gathered in a loose knot low on her neck. She wore a filmy gown, the color of poppies. I quite agreed with the artists, she was undoubtedly picturesque.

"You must go back with me at once, Mercy," she said; "papa wants to see you very much. And, oh, I forgot to tell you, Uncle Julian is with us. We met him in Boston and he came on with us. Wasn't it odd?"

"Yes, rather," I answered, quietly, while my heart was beating quickly and a strange sense of joy was thrilling me from head to foot. The very sunshine seemed brighter and the perfume of the flowers sweeter. "I must go change my dress," I added. "Will you come, Gypsy?"

"No; I'll stay with Mammy; I haven't spoken to her yet," she replied. "And here comes Uncle Zach," and she ran off toward the kitchen door, where Mammy stood smiling broadly.

I went to my room and arrayed myself in a simple white frock with nothing in the way of trimming save some old yellow lace at my neck and sleeves. There was a spray of pale-tinted roses in a glass on my toilet stand. I took them up and twined them in my hair. I stood, for a moment, looking at myself in the glass. I had given but little thought to my appearance before, but now I wondered, with a flush tingling my cheeks, if there was any truth in what Gypsy had said. Would others see beauty in my gray, black-lashed eyes, white, flawless skin, which I had always thought too lacking in color for beauty, and the heavy masses of yellow hair wound about my head?

Gypsy and I walked across the gray turnpike and then under the great oaks where it was shadowy and chill even on that matchless June day. My heart was beating quickly. I could hardly tell whether it was with joy or dread of again meeting Doctor Merrill because of painful memories the sight of him might evoke.

As we passed out from the shadows of the oaks and up on the portico I saw that Doctor Merrill was seated there alone. As he slowly arose from the low chair in which he was seated, I saw that he was indeed greatly changed. Gaunt, emaciated, ghastly, his beard as white as his hair, his crooked shoulders more bent.

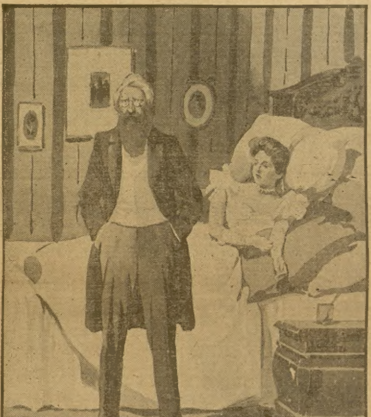
I went up to him and gently, pityingly, held out my hand. I forgot that I had ever been repelled at his touch; I only remembered how deeply, intensely and unceasingly he must have sorrowed for my mother. He took my hand in his, a beautiful, waxen hand, with the blue veins starting under the flesh. He stood gazing upon me for a moment, with those unfathomable eyes of his, which seemed to burn now in the ghasty pallor of his face. Then he spoke.

"Four years have not changed you, Mercy."

"Why, papa, how can you say that!" cried Gypsy. "I never thought Mercy pretty. But she has grown quite lovely, hasn't she, Uncle Julian?"

I turned slowly. In the doorway stood Julian Merrill, his blonde skin a little bronzed, but handsome as a god. He smiled as Gypsy spoke, but he did not answer until he had moved to my side and taken my hand in his. Then, with his eyes gazing deep down into mine, he murmured:

"Yes, Mercy has grown very lovely."



"John, is this death?"

And in that moment all the world changed for me.

Further chapters of this extraordinary story will appear in the Ledger of next week. To every subscriber we are still sending our free cameras and free patterns as stated on pages thirteen and fifteen.

BREAK THE FAST.

The Morning Meal Should Not Be Missed.

After a night's fast the stomach should have some food for breakfast to sustain mind and body during the morning. It should not be a heavy meal but wise selection will pay immensely.

A young Los Angeles woman says: "For years until I used Grape-Nuts I have never been able to eat breakfast, for eating in the morning was always followed by terrific sick headaches and my stomach has always been delicate.

"Some time ago a friend urged me to try Grape-Nuts food and I began eating it every morning. As a result of its steady use I have gained 11 pounds and the headaches have disappeared entirely and my weak stomach has become normal and strong. All my food digests and I now perform my daily duties with a renewed cheerfulness and energy. Evidently I had been eating the wrong food, but Grape-Nuts soon put me right." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Look in each package for a copy of the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

TALE OF A FISH.

BY FRANK B. MOORE.

Teeney Pearl was the daughter of a fisherman. Her father lived in a boathouse on the shores of the great Missouri River where it flowed swiftly by the earth-walled foundations of a populous Western town.

Behind Teeney's small frame house rose the high clay banks, with only here and there a sloping path rising to the top. To the front and facing the great level plains which stretched away to the west rolled the river. Piles held the boathouse several feet in the air above the level of the waters.

Teeney's little playground beneath the boat and in its shadow on the beach during the afternoon when the sun had melted the snow and warmed the earth was stocked with the simple treasures that the moving tide had cast upon the shore.

Teeney's father was industrious. Every night he rowed far out into the river and cast his weighted lines into the water. Early in the morning Teeney stood on the bank and watched him draw them in and remove the cruel hooks from the fishes before they were taken to the market in the city. Idling along the shores and standing by the side of the deep places, the little girl gradually came to know the playground of the finny creatures that had their home in the waters.

Around a little bend not far from her boathouse home Teeney one day discovered a great catfish in the bottom of a deep pool. It was a cool, shady spot and the big fish lay on the bottom when the day was hot and Teeney could see it move its fins and roll its long tail about.

At first she was greatly pleased at her discovery. She thought she would run and tell her father about the fish. It was much bigger and longer than any she had ever seen him draw from the river. But the big fish looked so peaceful and innocent that she resolved to let it alone. This determination became fixed when one day she saw several little fish swim and circle around the big fish.

Teeney concluded that they were its children and that the pool was their home. She said to herself:

"I will let the poor fishes live in their home down deep in the water."

Every day she carried bread to the pool and dropped it into the water and she laughed with glee as she watched the big fish bite it and all the little ones swim around after the crumbs. By and by the big fish began to watch for the little girl and it would rise to the surface to take its dinner of bread from her hand. Many hours were spent by lonely Teeney with her strange companion of the deep.

One morning Teeney's father said he would take his lines and fish in the pools along the shore. Her heart filled with dread for the fate of her friend. While her father was preparing for his excursion she ran to the pool and hurled stones into it. The big fish rose to the surface and looked at the little girl. Its eyes seemed to wear an expression of grief. Teeney shouted:

"Go away from here, you big fish! My father is coming to catch you on his hook!"

The fish sank from sight and Teeney went back to her home and watched in trembling while her father cast the alluring bait into the water. After a time the fisherman gave up and went on to another pool, saying as he went that he did not believe there were any fish in that part of the river.

After that followed many rainy days when Teeney could hardly stir front her little home. The water rose to an alarming height and the fisherman's family was in danger of being washed away. The boat was old and leaky from standing in the warm sunshine. They felt that they would have to move if the river rose much higher, for the water was creeping up toward the bottom of the boat and the piles were covered many inches from their foundations.

When Teeney crawled into her little bed one night and looked out over the waste of waters she thought of her friend the big fish and she peered into the depths of the river and wondered if he would be safe with all the water washing and washing down toward the sea that she had heard so much about and which was somewhere a long, long way off toward the south.

She was awakened from a sound sleep by hearing a thump, thump on her window, which overlooked the river. She was frightened and began to cry. She looked out and saw a great fish leaping into the air from the surface of the flood and striking the window with its tail. She screamed louder in alarm and woke her parents. They ran to her and her father cried out as he looked from the window:

"The flood! The flood is upon us!"

He took his little girl to his breast and, followed by his wife, leaped from the boat into the water and waded ashore. As they climbed the bank there was a crash and the boathouse rolled off its moorings and floated away on the flood.

As Teeney clung to her father's neck, looking out into the dreadful, angry water, she saw a big fish leaping and sporting on the foamy crest of the current.

Then she told her father the story of the fish and its quiet home in the pool.

Interested in the Present.

"Dearest," he said, looking dreamily ahead, but still keeping a lock clutch on her hand, "what matters it what trouble, what sorrow, what perils may be lurking in the unknown future? Now, that I have won you, now that I am with you, I think of nothing but the present—the fair, beautiful present."

"So do I, dear," the practical maiden confessed, coyly, "but wil—would you mind—will you take me with you when you buy it? Men have such funny taste in rings!"

Swift Town in Chicago.

"Were you struck with Chicago enterprise?"

"At once. I came away with the idea that their sandbags must be made of quicksand."

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UNION LABEL

ALLIED PRINTING
TRADES UNION LABEL COUNCIL
CHICAGO. ILL.

In order to acquire wealth a dentist must keep plugging away.

If Bulgaria insists on fighting Russia may consent to hold its coat.

A woman invariably has more listening than speaking acquaintances.

From the epicure's point of view fine feathers do not make fine birds.

Twinebinders for Canada henceforth should have bobsled attachments.

The pawnbroker doesn't have to shut up as long as people will put up with him.

Any man who is determined to enjoy life, whether he does or not, is a true optimist.

A bachelor imagines he's a born diplomat because he is able to settle his affairs out of court.

As the thing broke down completely, Professor Langley's contrivance is undoubtedly an airship.

Some of the new styles of dresses look as though some woman of royal blood had had a misfit and the world was striving to copy it.

Boston is to have a graveyard for cats and birds, though some people think it is in greater need of a cemetery for anti-imperial societies.

It is said that Francis Joseph may throw up the job as king of Hungary, as the Hungarians are giving him too much of a Karageorgevitch of a time.

To give the Turk and the Russian such a shock as they deserve we should send them full particulars of how a Chicago sweatbox confession is obtained.

Up to the present the British subject does not seem to have been especially impressed by Mr. Chamberlain's assurances that while the tariff dose may gag him it is all for his own good.

It has been telegraphed ahead that three Italian anarchists are on their way to Hungary to be present when Emperor William calls. What would an anarchist be without his press agent.

Just as soon as the Indian Territory is admitted into the union those people who have been stealing lands from the Indians doubtless will put themselves forward as proper candidates for the United States Senate.

The Blazed Trail

Or, Struggling for Gold

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE.

(Copyright, 1902, by S. E. White.)

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CHAPTER XXIII.

For several days this impression satisfied him completely. He discovered, strangely enough, that his restlessness had left him, that once more he was able to give to his work his former energy and interest.

At a touch his entire life had changed. Reality or vision, he had caught a glimpse of something so entirely different from anything his imagination or experience had ever suggested to him, that at first he could do no more than permit passively its influences to adjust themselves to his being. Outwardly, for three days, Harry Thorpe occupied himself only with the needs of the Fighting Forty at Camp One.

In the early morning he went out with the gang. While they chopped or heaved, he stood by serene. Not once did he glance at the nooning sun. His patience was quiet and sure. When evening came he smoked placidly outside the office, listening to the conversation and laughter of the men, watching dreamily the night shadows and the bats. At about nine o'clock he went to bed and slept soundly. He was vaguely conscious of a great peace within him.

Little by little the condition changed. The man felt vague stirrings of curiosity. Since the girl was so certainly flesh and blood, whence did she come? What was she doing there in the wilderness? When could he see her again? How find for the second time the vision before which his heart felt the instant need of prostrating itself? His placidity had gone. That morning he made some vague excuse to Shearer and set out blindly down the river.

When the snows are deep and snowshoes not the property of every man who cares to journey, the old-fashioned "pole trail" comes into use. It is merely a series of horses built of timber across which thick Norway logs are laid, about four feet from the ground, to form a continuous pathway. A man must be a tight-rope walker to stick to the pole trail when ice and snow have sheathed its logs. In summer it resembles nothing so much as a thick one-rail fence of considerable height, around which a fringe of light brush has grown.

Thorpe reached the fringe of bushes and was about to dodge under the fence, when he saw her. So he stopped short, concealed by the leaves and the timber horse.

She stood on a knoll in the middle of a grove of monster pines. The girl stood tall and straight among the tall, straight pines like a figure on an ancient tapestry. She was doing nothing—just standing there—but the awe of the forest was in her wide, clear eyes.

The great sweet feeling clutched the young man's throat again. He looked and looked, and looked again. He saw the full pure curve of her cheek's contour. He appreciated the half-pathetic downward droop of the corners of her mouth—her red mouth in dazzling, bewitching contrast to the milk-whiteness of her skin. He caught the fineness of her nose, straight as a Grecian's, but with some faint suggestion about the nostrils that hinted a piquance. And the waving corn silk of her unruly hair, the superb column of her long neck on which her little head poised proudly like a flower, her supple body, her slender white hand with the pointed fingers—all these he saw one after the other, and his soul shouted within him at the sight. He wrestled with the emotions that choked him. In a moment she stirred slightly, turned and moved away in the direction of the river.

Thorpe ate hardly all that day and slept ill, and discovered the greatest difficulty in preserving the outward semblance of ease which the presence of Tim Shearer and the Fighting Forty demanded.

And the next day he saw her again, and the next, because the need of his heart demanded it, and because simply enough, she came every afternoon to the clump of pines by the old pole trail. And now curiosity awoke and a desire for something more. He must speak to her, touch her hand, look into her eyes. He resolved to approach her, and the mere thought choked him and sent him weak.

When he saw her again from the shelter of the pole trail, he dared not, and so stood there prey to a novel sensation. It awoke within him a vast passion compounded part of rage at himself, part of longing for that which he could not take, but most of love for the girl. As he hesitated he saw that she was walking slowly in his direction.

In a moment she had reached the fringe of brush about the pole trail. They stood face to face.

She gave a little start of surprise and her hand leaped to her breast, where it caught and stayed. Her childlike, down-drooping mouth parted a little more, and the breath quickened through it. But her eyes, her wide, trusting, innocent eyes, sought his and rested.

He did not move. One on either side of the spike-marked old Norway log of the trail they stood, and for an appreciable interval the duel of their glances lasted—he, masterful, passionate, exigent; she, proud, cool, defensive in the aloofness of her beauty. Then at last his prevailed. A faint color rose from her neck, deepened, and spread over her face and forehead. In a moment she dropped her eyes.

"Don't you think you stare a little rudely, Mr. Thorpe?" she asked.

She stood before him, her head turned half way, a faint blush still tingeing her skin, watching him with a dim, half-pleading smile in expectation of his reply.

His anguish sounded almost harsh.

"How did you know my name?" he asked.

She planted both elbows on the Norway.

"If Mr. Harry Thorpe can ask that question," she replied, "he is not quite so impolite as I had thought him."

"If you don't stop pouting your lips, I shall kiss them," cried Harry—to himself.

"How is that?" he inquired, breathlessly.

"Don't you know who I am?" she asked in return.

"A goddess, a beautiful woman!" he answered ridiculously enough.

"I am a friend of Elizabeth Carpenter, who is Wallace Carpenter's sister, who I believe is Mr. Harry Thorpe's partner."

She paused as though for comment. Some moments later the words trickled into his brain and some moments after that he realized their meaning.

"We wrote Mr. Harry Thorpe that we were about to descend on his district with wagons and tents and Indians and things, and asked him to come and see us."

The girl looked at him for a moment steadily, then smiled. The change of countenance brought Thorpe to himself.

"But I never received the letter. I'm so sorry," said he. "It must be at the mill. You see, I've been up in the woods for nearly a month."

"Then we'll have to forgive you."

"But I should think they would have done something for you at the mill——"

"Oh, we didn't come by way of your mill. We drove from Marquette."

"I see!" cried Thorpe, enlightened. "But I'm sorry I didn't know. I'm sorry you didn't let me know. I suppose you thought I was at the mill. How did you get along? Is Wallace with you?"

"No," she replied, dropping her hands and straightening her erect figure. "It's horrid. He was coming, and then some business came up and he couldn't get away. We are having the loveliest time, though. I do adore the woods. Come," she cried, impatiently, sweeping aside to leave a way clear, "you shall meet my friends."

Thorpe imagined she referred to the rest of the tenting party. He hesitated. "I am hardly in fit condition," he objected.

She laughed parting her red lips. "You are exceedingly picturesque just as you are," she said, with rather embarrassing directness. "I wouldn't have you any different for the world. But my friends don't mind. They are used to it." She laughed again.

Thorpe crossed the pole trail, and for the first time found himself by her side. The warm summer odors were in the air, a dozen lively little birds sang in the brush along the rail, the sunlight danced and flickered through the opening.

Then suddenly they were among the pines, and the air was cool, the vista dim, and the bird songs inconceivably far away.

The girl walked directly to the foot of a pine three feet through and soaring up an inconceivable distance through the still twilight.

"This is Jimmy," said she, gravely. "He is a dear good old rough bear when you don't know him, but he likes me. If you put your ear close against him," she confided, suiting the action to the word, "you can hear him talking to himself. This little fellow is Tommy. I don't care so much for Tommy because he's sticky. Still, I like him pretty well, and here's Dick, and that's Bob, and the one just beyond is Jack."

"Where is Harry?" asked Thorpe.

"I thought one in a woods was quite sufficient," she replied, with the least little air of impertinence.

"Why do you name them such common, everyday names?" he inquired.

"I'll tell you. It's because they are so big and grand themselves, that it did not seem to me they needed high-sounding names. What do you think?" she begged with an appearance of the utmost anxiety.

Thorpe expressed himself as in agreement. As the half-quizzical conversation progressed, however, he said little, and that lamely, for he dreaded to say too much.

And so the last spoken exchange between them meant nothing; but if each could have read the unsaid words that quivered on the other's heart, Thorpe would have returned to the Fighting Forty more tranquilly, while she would probably not have returned to the camping party at all for a number of hours.

"I do not think you had better come with me," she said. "Make your call and be forgiven on your own account."

"All right. I'll come this afternoon," Thorpe had replied.

"I love her; I must have her. I must go—at once," his soul had cried, "quick now—before I kiss her."

"How strong he is," she said to herself, "how brave-looking, how honest; he is different from the other men; he is magnificent."

CHAPTER XXIV.

That afternoon Thorpe met the other members of the party, offered his apologies, and was graciously forgiven. He found the personnel to consist of, first of all, Mrs. Cary, the chaperon, a very young married woman of twenty-two or thereabouts; her husband, a youth of three years older, clean-shaven, light-haired, quiet-mannered; Miss Elizabeth Carpenter, who resembled her brother in the characteristics of good looks; vivacious disposition and curly hair; an attendant satellite called Morton; and last of all the girl whom Thorpe had already so variously encountered and whom he now met as Miss Hilda Farrand. Besides these were Ginger, a squab negro, built to fit the galley of a yacht; the three Indian guides. They inhabited tents, which made quite a little encampment.

Thorpe was received with enthusiasm. One and all owned a lively curiosity to see what a real woodsman might be like. When he proved to be handsome and well-mannered, as well as picturesque, his reception was no longer in doubt.

Nothing could exceed his solicitude as to their comfort and amusement. He inspected personally the arrangement of the tents, and suggested one or two changes conducive to the littler comforts.

Simple things enough they were to do—it was as though a city man were to direct a newcomer to Central Park. When he had finished they wanted him to sit down and tell them more things—to dine with them, to smoke about their camp fire in the evening. But here they encountered a decided check. Thorpe became silent, almost morose. He talked in monosyllables, and soon went away. He would not act the lion nor tell of his, to them, uninteresting adventures.

However, when he discovered that Hilda had ceased visiting the clump of pines near the pole trail, his desire forced him back among these people. He used to walk in swiftly at almost any time of day, casting quick glances here and there in search of his divinity.

"How do you do, Mrs. Cary?" he would say. "Nice weather. Enjoying yourself?"

On receiving the reply he would answer heartily, "That's good," and lapse into silence. When Hilda was about he followed every movement of hers with his eyes, so that his strange conduct lacked no explanation nor interpretation, in the minds of the women at least.

At length he took them over to see Camp One, and on the way back, for the first time, Thorpe found that chance—and Mrs. Cary—had allotted Hilda to his care.

"Why don't you come to the pine grove any more?" he asked, bluntly.

"Why?" countered Hilda, in the manner of women.

"I want to see you there. I want to talk with you. I can't talk with all that crowd around."

"I'll come tomorrow," she said, then, with a little mischievous laugh, "if that'll make you talk."

"You must think I'm awfully stupid," agreed Thorpe, bitterly.

"Ah, no! ah, no!" she protested, softly. "You must not say that."

She was looking at him very tenderly, if he had only known it, but he did not, for his face was set in discontented lines straight before him.

They walked on in silence, while gradually the dangerous fascination of the woods crept down on them. The wind has died, the birds have not yet begun their evening songs, the light itself seems to have left off sparkling and to lie still across the landscape. Such a hush now lay on their spirits. Over the way a creeper was droning sleepily a little chant—the only voice in the wilderness In the heart of the man, too, a little voice raised itself alone.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart!" it breathed over and over again. After a while he said it gently in a half voice.

"No, no, hush!" said the girl, and she laid the soft, warm fingers of one hand across his lips, and looked at him from a height of superior soft-eyed tenderness.

"You must not. It is not right."

Then he kissed the fingers very gently before they were withdrawn, and she said nothing at all in rebuke, but looked straight before her with troubled eyes.

Thorpe returned to Camp One shortly after dark. He found there Scotty Parsons, who had come up to take charge of the crew engaged in clearing French Creek. The man brought him a number of letters, among which was one from Wallace Carpenter.

After commending the camping party to his companion's care, and giving minute directions as to how and where to meet it, the young fellow went on to say that affairs were going badly on the Board.

"Some interest that I haven't been able to make out yet has been hammering our stocks down day after day," he wrote. "I don't understand it, for the stocks are good and intrinsically are worth more than is bid for them right now. Some powerful concern is beating them down for a purpose of its own. Sooner or later they will let up, and then we'll get things back in good shape. I am amply protected now, thanks to you. The only difficulty is that I am unable to predict exactly when the other fellows will decide to let up. It may not be before next year. In that case I couldn't help you out on those notes when they come due. So put in your best licks, old man. Of course, sooner or later I can put it all back. Then, you bet your life, I keep out of it. Lumbering is good enough for yours truly.

"By the way, you might shine up to Hilda Farrand and join the rest of the fortune-hunters. She's got it to throw to the birds, and in her own right. Seriously, old fellow, don't put yourself in a false position through ignorance. Not that there is any danger to a hardened old woodsman like you."

Thorpe went to the group of pines by the pole trail the following afternoon with a new attitude of mind. He had come into contact with the artificiality of conventional relations, and it stiffened him. No wonder she had made him keep silence the afternoon before. She had done it gently and nicely, to be sure, but that was part of her good breeding. Hilda found him formal, reserved, polite; and marvelled at it.

They sat down on a log. Hilda turned to him with her graceful air of confidence.

"Now, talk to me," she said.

"Certainly," replied Thorpe, in a practical tone of voice, "what do you want me to talk about?"

She shot a swift, troubled glance at him, concluded herself mistaken, and said:

"Tell me about what you do up here—your life—all about it."

"Well," replied Thorpe, formally, "we haven't much to interest a girl like you. It is a question of saw logs with us," and he went on in his dryest, most technical manner to detail the process of manufacture. It might as well have been bricks.

The girl did not understand. She was hurt. As surely as the sun tangled in the distant pine frond, she had seen in his eyes a great passion. Now it was coldly withdrawn.

"What has happened to you?" she asked, finally out of her great sincerity.

"Me? Nothing?" replied Thorpe.

A forced silence fell upon him. Hilda seemed gradually to lose herself in reverie. After a time she said, softly:

"Don't you love this woods?"

"It's an excellent bunch of pine," replied Thorpe, bluntly. "It'll cut three million at least."

"Oh!" she cried, drawing back, her hands pressed against the log either side of her, her eyes wide.

After a moment she caught her breath convulsively, and Thorpe became conscious that she was studying him furtively with a quickening doubt.

After that, by the mercy of God, there was no more talk between them.

A red squirrel poised thirty feet above them, leaped and clung swaying to a sapling top a dozen yards from the tree he had quitted. Two chickadees upside down uttering liquid undertones, searched busily for insects next their heads. Wilson's warblers, pine creepers, black-throats, myrtle and magnolia warblers, oven birds, peewits, blue jays, purple finches, passed silently or noisily, each according to his kind.

Unconsciously the first strain of opposition and of hurt surprise had relaxed. Each thought vaguely his thoughts. Then in the depths of the forest, perhaps near at hand, perhaps far away, a single hermit thrush began to sing. His song was of three solemn deep liquid notes; followed by a slight pause as of contemplation; and then, deliberately, three notes more on a different key; and so on without haste and without pause. It is the most spiritual, the holiest of woods utterances. Combined with the evening shadows and the warm, soft air, it offered to the heart an almost irresistible appeal. The man's artificial antagonism modified, the woman's disenchantment began to seem unreal.

Then subtly over and through the bird song another sound became audible. At first it merely repeated the three notes faintly, like an echo, but with a rich, sad undertone that brought tears. Then, timidly and still softly, it elaborated the theme, weaving in and out through the original three the glitter and shimmer of a splendid web of sound. The pine shadows, the calls of the wild creatures, the flow of the brook, the splashes of sunlight through the trees, the sigh of the winds, the shout of the rapid—all these were there, distinctly to be felt in their most ethereal and beautiful forms. And yet it was all slight and tenuous as though the crack of a twig would break it through.

With the first sigh of the wonder music the girl had started and caught her breath in the exquisite pleasure of it.

"Ah, beautiful!" she murmured.

"What is it?" he whispered, marvelling.

"A violin—played by a master."

The bird suddenly hushed, and at once the strain abandoned the woodsnote and took another motif. At first it played softly in the higher notes, a tinkling, lightsome little melody that stirred a kindly surface-smile over a full heart. Then suddenly, without transition, it dropped to the lower register, and began to sob and wail in the full vibrating power of a great passion.

At last the poignant ecstasy seemed slowly, slowly to die. Fainter and fainter ebbed the music. Through it as through a mist the solemn aloof forest began to show to the consciousness of the two. They sought each other's eyes gently smiling. The music was very soft and dim and sad. They leaned to each other with a sob. Their lips met. The music ceased.

And over behind the trees, out of the light and the love and beauty, little Phil huddled, his great shaggy head bowed in his arms. Beside him lay his violin, and beside that his bow, broken.

CHAPTER XXV.

Little Phil disappeared utterly, taking with him his violin, but leaving his broken bow. Thorpe has it even to this day. The lumberman caused search and inquiry on all sides. The cripple was never heard of again.

"I saw you long ago," said Hilda to Thorpe. "Long, long ago, when I was quite a young girl. I had been visiting in Detroit, and was on my way all alone to catch an early train. You stood on the corner thinking, tall and straight and brown, with a weather-beaten old hat and a weatherbeaten old coat and weatherbeaten old moccasins, and such a proud, clear, undaunted look on your face. I have remembered you ever since."

In the last days of the month of delight Thorpe received a second letter from his partner, which to some extent awakened him to the realities.

"My dear Harry," it ran. "I have made a startling discovery. The other fellow is Morrison. I have been a blind, stupid dolt, and am caught nicely. You can't call me any more names than I have already called myself. Morrison has been in it from the start. By an accident I learned he was behind the fellow who induced me to invest, and it is he who has been hammering the stock down ever since. They couldn't lick you at their game, so they tackled me at mine. I've made a mess of it. Of course, their scheme is plain enough on the face of it. They're going to involve me so deeply that I will drag the firm down with me.

"If you can fix it to meet these notes, they can't do it. I have ample margin to cover any more declines they may be able to bring about. Don't fret about that. Just as sure as you can pay that sixty thousand, just so sure we'll be ahead of the game at this time next year. For God's sake get a move on you, old man. If you don't—good Lord! The firm'll bust because she can't pay; I'll bust because I'll have to let my stock go; it'll be an awful smash. But you'll get there, so we needn't worry. I've been an awful fool, and I've no right to do the getting into trouble and leave you to do the hard work of getting out again. But as partner I'm going to insist on your having a salary," etc.

The news aroused all Thorpe's martial spirit. Now at last the mystery surrounding Morrison & Daly's unnatural complaisance was given. It had come to grapples again. He was glad of it. He thrust the letter in his pocket and walked buoyantly to the pines.

The two lovers sat there all the afternoon drinking in half sadly the joy of the forest and of being near each other, for the moon of delight was almost done. In a week the camping party would be breaking up, and Hilda must return to the city. It was uncertain when they would be able to see each other again, though there was talk of getting up a winter party to visit Camp One in January.

Suddenly the girl broke off and put her fingers to her lips. For some time, dimly, an intermittent and faint sound had been felt, rather than actually heard, like the irregular, muffled beating of a heart. Now at last it broke through the film of consciousness.

"What is it?" she asked.

Thorpe listened. Then his face lit mightily with the joy of battle.

"My axmen," he cried. "They are cutting the road."

A faint call echoed. Then without warning, nearer at hand the sharp ring of an ax sounded through the forest.

For a moment they sat listening to the clear staccato knocking of the distant blows, and the more forceful thuds of the man near at hand.

"What are they doing? Are they cutting lumber?" asked Hilda.

"No," answered Thorpe, "we do not cut saw logs at this time of year. They are clearing out a road."

"Where does it go to?"

"Well, nowhere in particular. That is, it is a logging road that starts at the river and wanders up through the woods where the pine is."

"How clear the axes sound. Can't we go down and watch them a little while?"

"The main gang is a long distance away; sound carries very clearly in this still air. As for that fellow you heard so plainly, he is only clearing out small stuff to get ready for the others."

"Let's not go then," said Hilda, submissively.

"When you come up in the winter," he pursued, "you will see any amount of big timber felled."

"I would like to know more about it," she sighed, a quaint little air of childish petulance graving two lines between her eyebrows. "Do you know, Harry, you are a singularly uncommunicative sort of being. I have to guess that your life is interesting and picturesque, that is," she amended, "I should have to do so if Wallace Carpenter had not told me a little something about it. Do you know that I really don't know anything at all about the life you lead here? From what I have seen, you might be perpetually occupied in eating things in a log cabin, and in disappearing to perform some mysterious rites in the forest." She looked at him with a smiling mouth but tender eyes.

"Now tell me," she breathed.

"What?" he inquired.

"Your life; what you do; all about it."

Thorpe settled himself more lazily, and laughed with quiet enjoyment. The barrier between himself and self-expression had faded.

"The story of the woods," he began, "the story of the saw log. It would take a bigger man than I to tell it. I doubt if any one man ever would be big enough. It is a drama, a struggle, a battle. Those men you hear there are only the skirmishers extending the firing line. We are fighting always with Time. I'll have to hurry now to get those roads done and a certain creek cleared before the sonw. Then we'll have to keep on the keen move to finish our cutting before the deep snow; to haul our logs before the spring thaws; to float them down the river while the freshet water lasts. When we gain a day we have scored a victory; when the wilderness puts us back an hour, we have suffered a defeat."

The girl placed her hand on his shoulder. He covered it with his own.

"That is what I like," she said, softly; "the strong spirit that wins!" She hesitated, then went on, gently: "But the battlefields, Harry; to me they are dreadful. I went walking yesterday morning before you came over, and after a while I found myself in the most awful place. The stumps of trees, the dead branches, the trunks lying all about, and the glaring hot sun over everything. I can shut my eyes now and can see this place, our dear little wooded knoll wasted and blackened as that was."

The man twisted his shoulder uneasily and withdrew his hand.

"Harry," she said again, after a pause, "you must promise to leave this woods until the very last."

Thorpe remained silent. In selecting the districts for the season's cut he had included in his estimates this very grove. Since then he had seen no reason for changing his decision. The operations would not commence until winter. By that time the lovers would no longer care to use it as at present. Now rapidly he passed in review a dozen expedients by which his plan might be modified to permit of the grove's exclusion. His practical mind discovered flaws in every one.

"Hilda," he broke in, abruptly at last, "the men you hear are clearing a road to this very timber"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"This timber is marked for cutting this very winter."

She had not a suspicion of the true state of affairs. "Isn't it lucky I spoke of it!" she exclaimed. "You must see to it today; now!"

She sprang up impulsively and stood waiting for him. He arose more slowly.

"Hilda, I cannot," he said.

She stood very still for some seconds.

"Why not?" she asked, quietly.

"Because I have no time to cut a road through to another bunch of pine. It is this or nothing."

"Why not nothing, then?"

"I want the money this will bring."

"Will you tell me for what you want the money?" she asked.

The young man caught the note of distrust. At once, instinctively, his own confidence vanished.

"The firm needs it in the business," said he.

Her next question countered instantaneously:

"Does the firm need the money more than you do me?"

They stared at each other in the silence of the situation that had so suddenly developed. It had come into being without their volition, as a dust cloud springs up on a plain.

"You do not mean that, Hilda," said Thorpe, quietly. "It hardly comes to that."

"Indeed, it does," she replied, stung to excitement. "I should be more to you than any firm."

"Sometimes it is necessary to look after the bread and butter," Thorpe reminded her gently, although he knew that was not the real reason at all.

"If your firm can't supply it, I can," she answered. "It seems strange that you won't grant my first request of you, merely because of a little money."

"It isn't a little money," he objected, catching manlike at the practical question. "You don't realize what an amount a clump of pine like this stands for. There's ten thousand dollars' profit in it."

The girl, exasperated by cold details at such time, blazed out, "I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life," she cried. "Either you are not at all the man I thought you, or you have some better reason than you have given. Tell me, Harry; tell me at once. You don't know what you are doing."

"The firm needs it, Hilda," said Thorpe; "in order to succeed. If we do not cut this pine, we may fail."

"If I were a man," she said, and her voice was tense, "if I were a man and loved a woman, I would be ready to give up everything for her. My riches, my pride, my life, my honor, my soul even—they would be as nothing to me—if I loved. Harry, don't let me think that I am mistaken. Let this miserable firm of yours fail, if fail it must for lack of my poor little temple of dreams," she held out her hands with a tender gesture of appeal. The affair had gone beyond the preservation of a few trees. It had become the question of an ideal. Gradually, in spite of herself, the conviction was forcing itself upon her that the man she had loved was no different from the rest; that the greed of the dollar had corrupted him, too. By the mere yielding to her wishes, she wanted to prove the suspicion wrong.

Now the strange part of the whole situation was, that in two words Thorpe could have cleared it. If he had explained that he needed the ten thousand dollars to help pay a note given to save from ruin a foolish friend, he would have supplied to the affair just the higher motive the girl's clear spirituality demanded. The young man did not say the two words, because in all honesty he thought them unimportant. It seemed to him quite natural that he should go on Wallace Carpenter's note.

"I cannot, Hilda," he answered, steadily.

"You sell me for ten thousand dollars! I cannot believe it! Harry! Harry! Must I put it to you as a choice? Don't you love me enough to spare me that?"

He did not reply.

"Do you need the money more than you do me? More than you do love?" she begged, her soul in her eyes; for she was begging also for herself. "Think, Harry; it is the last chance!"

In answer to Hilda's question he merely inclined his head.

"I have seen a vision," said she, simply, and lowered her head to conceal her eyes. Then she looked at him again. "There can be nothing better than love," she said.

"Yes; one thing," said Thorpe, "the duty of success."

She left him then, and did not see him again. Four days later the camping party left.

Three weeks gone in October he received a marked newspaper announcing the engagement of Miss Hilda Farrand to Mr. Hildreth Morton of Chicago.

Another installment of this truthful and exciting story of life in the logging and lumber trade will be given Ledger readers in next week's Ledger. Every regular subscriber to the Ledger is offered cameras and patterns free as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

A Marvelous Memory.

Cardinal Mezzofanti, who died fifty-four years ago, was possessed of a very wonderful memory, which he applied to the learning of a great number of languages. Lord Byron described him as "a walking polyglot, a monster of languages and a Briareus of parts of speech." He could learn a new language in the course of three weeks on occasion, so as to be able to talk fluently with those whose tongue it was. At the age of 54 Mezzofanti knew fifty languages; before his death he is said to have known seventy or eighty. More of these were European than most people would imagine to be the case. For instance, Wallachian, Illyrian, the Romani of the Alps, Lettish and Lappish figured among the twenties in his list; for the remainder of which he went to other continents. Mezzofanti's system of learning languages was simple enough where books were available. He read the grammar through, after which he was its master, for he never forgot what he had read. Many of his languages were learned from prisoners whom he visited in their affliction.

Get Rid of Scrofula

Bunches, eruptions, inflammations, soreness of the eyelids and ears, diseases of the bones, rickets, dyspepsia, catarrh, wasting, are only some of the troubles it causes.

It is a very active evil, making havoc of the whole system.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

Eradicates it, cures all its manifestations, and builds up the whole system.

Accept no substitute.

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WHISKY How to make 5 gallons genuine Old Whisky for only $1.00 by mixing a few drugs. This Recipe has raised many a poor man to fame and fortune. Particulars free. STAR CO., 1694 Ohio St., Chicago.

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OPIUM and Liquor Habit cured in 10 to 20 days. No pay till cured. Write DR. J. L. STEPHENS CO., Dept. B 2 Lebanon, Ohio.

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FREE FARMS

The New Homestead law offers every man or woman a farm Free. [illegible] cents for new book containing the new homestead law and the name and location of every United States Land Office. This book tells just where to go for free farms and exactly what to do and how to select the land in the states of Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, N. Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. You will find in this book how to secure free a farm among the gold hills of Colorado, the timberlands of Washington, the prairie farms of the west, or for fruit farms in the south. Write at once inclosing 25 cents for this new book. W. O. WATKINS & CO., 710 Lewis Block, Pittsburg, Pa.

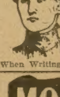
When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

My Earnest Appeal

To Wives and Mothers

My Husband Was a Hard Drinker for Over 20 Years, But I at Last Cured Him

Write Me Today and I Will Gladly Tell You How I Did It



My husband was a hard drinker for over 20 years and had tried in every way to stop, but could not do so. I at last cured him by a simple home remedy which anyone can give secretly. I want everyone who has drunkenness in their homes to know of this, and if they are sincere in their desire to cure this disease and will write to me, I will tell them just what the remedy is. My address is Mrs. Margaret Anderson, Box 219, Hillburn, N. Y. I am sincere in this offer. I have sent this valuable information to thousands and will gladly send it to you if you will but write me today. As I have nothing whatever to sell, I want no money.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

MORPHINE

Why Remain a Slave

to Morphine, Cocaine, Opium, Laudanum and other drug habits when you can be cured at home.

We guarantee an absolute permanent and painless cure to those addicted to the use of drugs, if they will take our treatment and follow our instructions.

Each case submitted to us receives individual attention and treatment from an experienced nerve specialist.

We do not detain you from business. We give immediate relief. Appetite for drugs is destroyed and appetite for food is restored. Sleep becomes normal at the beginning of the treatment. We restore the nervous and physical systems to their natural conditions because we remove the cause of disease.

We Guarantee a Cure

Free Trial Treatment

Write at once for our free booklet which gives references, terms, etc.

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LIFE SIZE DOLL

FREE

2½ Feet High.

Girls, here is a Great Big Doll; big enough to wear your outgrown baby dresses, which you can put on and off, button and unbutton, to your heart's desire. It is the most popular doll made. Dollie has an indestructible head, golden hair, rosy cheeks, brown eyes, kid colored body, red stockings, black shoes, and will stand alone. It is an exact reproduction of a hand painted French Doll and will live in your memory long after childhood days have passed. We will give this beautiful doll absolutely Free as a premium for selling only four boxes of our Great Cold and Headache Tablets at 25 cents a box. Write today and we will send Tablets by mail postpaid. When sold send us the money ($1.00) and we will send you this Life Size Doll which is 2½ feet high, and can wear baby's clothes.

EXTRA PREMIUM.

If you send us the money within one week after receiving the Tablets, we will send with the doll, six Gold plated Ribbon Pins, as an extra premium for prompt work. We take back all goods not sold. Address,

NATIONAL MEDICINE CO.

Doll Dept. 38K, New Haven, Conn

MOST POPULAR DOLL MADE

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

IT'S A MISTAKE.

To Attribute Coffee Ills to Poor Grades of Coffee

Many people lay all the blame for the diseases caused by coffee upon the poorer grades of coffee but this is an error as the following proves: "I have used every kind of the best grade of tea and coffee that can be got from a first class grocer but never found one that would not upset my nervous system and it was not until I began to drink Postum Food Coffee in place of coffee and tea that I had relief from the terrific attacks of nervous sick headache from which I had suffered for 30 years.

"I had tried all kinds of medicines but none helped me.

"Soon after I stopped drinking coffee and began to drink Postum the headaches grew less and it was not long until I was entirely cured and I have never had a return of this distressing trouble for nowadays I never drink coffee but stick to Postum.

"As soon as my wife saw what Postum had done for me she gave up coffee which she had drank all her life. This was si: years ago and she is a changed woman for her nervousness has all disappeared, her face has become smooth and her cheeks have a good rosy red color. She sleeps well, too, something she could never do while she drank coffee. We consider Postum a household necessity in my house and have induced many friends to try this wonderful food drink in place of coffee." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Look in each package for a copy of the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Another Theory.

"Necessity," remarked the man with the chronic quotation habit, "is the mother of invention."

"There's where you've got a flat wheel," said the contrary person. "Invention is the parent of necessity."

"How do you figure that out?"

"Well, take the telephone, for example. There was no necessity for it until after it was invented."

A Fine Kidney Remedy.

Mr. A. S. Hitchcock, East Hampton, Conn. (The Clothier), says if any sufferer from Kidney and Bladder Disease will write him he will direct them to the perfect home cure he used. He makes no charge whatever for the favor.

His Finish.

Bifkins—Yes; his father gave him $5,000 and told him to go out into the world and make a man of himself.

Mifkins—And what was the result?

Bifkins—Oh, he hadn't been out more than twenty-four hours when a golden-haired lady proceeded to make a monkey of him.

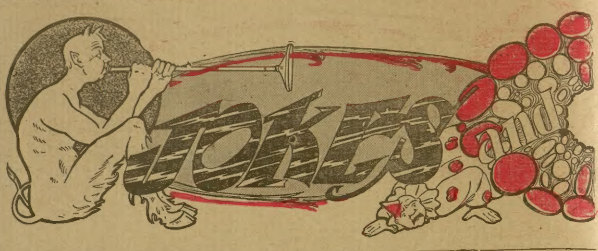
Miss Slender.

Her bathing dress—which naught reveals—
Must please the prudes, I know.
Her charms she modestly conceals,
For she has none to show.

Arrested Development.

Richard—Are these good apples on your trees?

Robert—We don't know; our neighbors' two boys never let any of them get ripe.



Failed to Make Good.

Old Gotrox hobbled into the reception room, where he found his bride in tears.

"Why, what's the matter, dear?" asked the old man.

"Y-you don't l-love me any m-more," sobbed the bride of six long, weary weeks.

"Why do you think that?" queried the venerable head of the household.

"W-when you asked me to m-marry you," replied the unhappy female, "you s-said you would g-gladly die for me, d-didn't you?"

"Yes; I believe I did," acknowledged the old boy.

"W-well," queried the fair sobber, "why d-don't you d-do it?"

Remote Kin.

Kind Lady—How many are there in the family besides yourself?

Little Amy—Four—mamma, papa, sister and a distant relative.

"That is only three. The distant relative is not a member of the family."

"Oh, yes he is. He is my brother."

"Your brother? Then he isn't a distant relative."

"Yes, ma'am; he is in the Philippines."

Can't Be Helped.

Bookkeeper—Six more of our dunning letters have been returned by the Dead Letter Office, and postage had to be paid on them.

Tailor—It can't be helped.

"If envelopes contained your name and address they would be returned without expense."

"Yes; but then the people who received them wouldn't open them."

A Neighborly Hint.

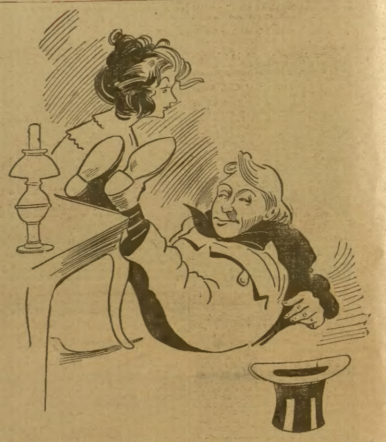
Mrs. Suburb—Why in the world don't you grease that lawn mower of yours?

Neighbor's Hired Man—The misses told me not to till you had your pianer tuned.

The Little Pugilist.

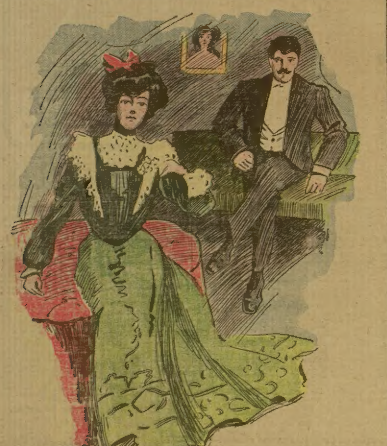
Mother—You naughty boy, you've been playing with those Sniff children again!

Wellington—No, I ain't, ma; I jus' been fighting 'em.



Mrs. Soaker (3 a. m.)—Oh, Henry! I thought you promised that when you left the club you would come straight home?

Soaker—Well, my dearsh. I—hic—came as straight—hic—as I could.



"I remember, when I was a youngster, I once walked five miles to whip a fellow."

"And then I suppose you walked home again?"

"No; they brought me home in an ambulance."

Easy Money.

They stood on the street corner, evidently having just emerged from the saloon opposite. Although the street was well lighted, they had gone to the lamppost and stood beneath its rays. One of the men was holding a large and luscious-looking roll of bills, which he was pealing like a housewife peals a cabbage, and one by one he was transferring the bits of happiness to his companion. That was the pathetic part of it all. For, with every bill, he would inquire, trustfily, yet anxiously: "How much is that one?" The other replied: "Five dollars." "And this is another five, isn't it?" "No; that's only a one."

And the passers-by went on wondering which was being bunkoed.

$1.00 Big Stove Offer.

If you can use the best big 500-pound steel range made in the world or the best coal or wood heating stove ever made, and are willing to have either stove placed in your own home on three month's free trial, just cut this notice out and send to SEARS, ROEBUCK & Co., Chicago, and you will receive free by return mail big pictures of both stoves, also many other cooking and heating stoves; you will also receive the most wonderful $1.00 steel range and heating stove offer, an offer that places the best steel range or heating stove in the home of any family, such an offer that no family in the land, no matter what their circumstances may be, or how small their income, need be without the best cooking or heating stove made.

Somewhat Extravagant.

George Lawler tells this story to show how few people know the value of money. His laundry work is done by a negress and he noticed that the woman's little girls were always eating candy when they brought the wash home.

"You must spend a good deal of money for candy," he remarked one Saturday to the elder girl.

"Indeed, I does," was the astonishing reply. "Why, me an' mah sistah has done spent millyuns an' millyuns of dollahs fur candy."

Willing to Compromise.

Friend—Practicing on a bass horn, eh? Don't your neighbors object?

Von Teutor—Yah; but I haf offered a gompromise.

"What did you propose to them?"

"I bromised if dey vould kill dere squally pabies, I vould smash mein bass horn."

A Fit of Economy.

Husband—Everything about the house has been at sixes and sevens for a month.

Wife—No wonder. You say times are hard, and I have been working myself to death fixing over an old straw hat.

"Oh!"

"Yes; saves buying a new spring hat, you know."

"You are a darling; but spring is about over."

"True; but I have this done at last, and I think I can make it do until I buy a new summer hat next week."

Good Advice.

A student noted for his carelessness in dress once approached Professor Simon Newcomb of Johns Hopkins University for advice. He was thinking of leaving college and going into business, having had a flattering offer.

"Now, you know my case, Professor," he said, "and if you were in my shoes what would you do?"

The professor looked very serious and replied:

"Black them, of course."

A Servant's Character.

A London paper prints a "character" which an English servant leaving kindly gave her mistress: "In answer to your letter, it's not a bad place; the Mrs. understands her dutys and is sivel and obliging but troubles about getting up early of the mornings. There is plenty and if you don't mind a place where only one other young lady is kept besides yourself you might give them a month's trial. I like more society, which is why I am leaving."

Queer Taste.

Farmer Wayback—Wall, of all durn fools that artist feller takes the cake.

Mrs. Wayback—What's he doin'?

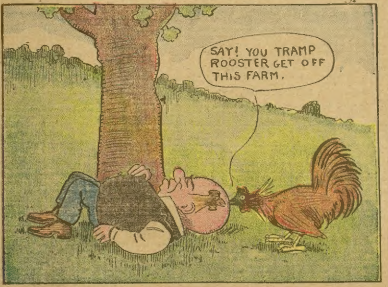
Farmer Wayback—He's down yonder paintin' a picture of that old tumble-down barn, and there's a brand-new barn right behind him.

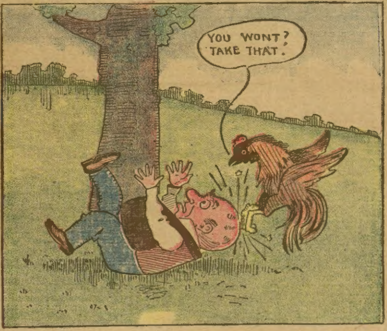
Enjoyed a Joke.

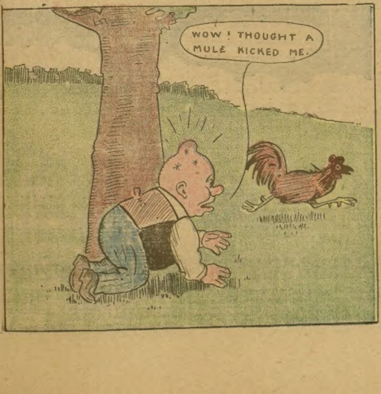
Jimson—I just tell you, you can't find a man anywhere who enjoys a good joke better than I do.

Friend—Guess that's so. I have heard you tell the same joke forty times and laugh at it every time.

JOLLITY
WEIR.


SAY! YOU TRAMP ROOSTER GET OFF THIS FARM.


YOU WONT? TAKE THAT.


WOW! THOUGHT A MULE KICKED ME.

Another Crank.

Mr. Farwest—There was a feller at the Board of Trade last night with the durndest ideas anybody ever heard of.

Wife—What was the meeting about?

"To devise ways an' means to boom the town."

"Well, what did the stranger propose?"

"The foolishest thing! You'd never guess. He got up and said, says he, 'The best way to boom a town,' says he, 'is to make it fit to live in.'"

An Artist in His Line.

Applicant—You are advertising for a retoucher, I see.

Photographer—Are you good at retouching?

Applicant—Good at it! Why, sir, I can retouch a woman's picture so artistically that her husband will fall in love with her.

An American Father.

Neighbor—Now that you have succeeded in givin' y'r sons and daughters a college edication, what are yeh goin' to do next?

Mr. Wayback—Wall, I dunno; but I've been thinkin' I'd better move out of town so I won't disgrace 'em.

Thought It a Challenge.

Hat Salesman—So you invaded France with your line? How did you make out?

Bicycle Salesman—Very poor. Every time I handed any one my card he thought I wanted to fight a duel.

A Bashful Policeman.

Mrs. Uppmann—I must tell you, Delia, that I was displeased at your entertaining that policeman in the kitchen last night.

Delia—Faith, Oi did ax him into the parlor, ma'am, but he wouldn't go.

Too Practical.

Bess—Why did you break off your engagement with Jack?

Nell—I asked him to guess my age—and he did.

Free Gold Watch

This fully warranted Solid Gold Plated Watch, equal in appearance to a $25.00 Gold Filled Watch warranted 20 years, is given FREE to Boys and Girls or anyone for selling 20 pieces of our handsome jewelry at 10c. each. Send your address and we will send the jewelry postpaid, when sold send us the $2 and we will positively send you the watch, also a chain for quick work. Write to-day. BOND JEWELRY CO., DEPT. 24, CHICAGO.

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John Mitchell's Book
"ORGANIZED LABOR."
AGENTS WANTED!

Every phase of this tremendous problem discussed by the greatest labor leader in the world. Every Union man buys at sight; also employers and all reading people. Big terms; also $1500 in cash prizes for agents. Workers clearing $5.00 to $15.00 daily. We are the exclusive publishers. Address quick for terms and territory. American Book and Bible House, 146 N. Tenth St., Phila., Pa.

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AGENTS WANTED

FREE GOLD WATCH

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LINKS OF LOVE AND GOLD;

Or, The Grey=Osmond Duel.

By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

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CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

"Why does she write to you as her 'best of friends,' Gerald?"

"Because I raised her husband from poverty to a most lucrative position, and, as he once saved my life, I have done all in my power to save him. Is it a wonder that his wife tries to in some way repay my kindness?"

"No; let me see the letter telling of his death," said Bessie, still a little doubtful.

Without a word, Gerald Grey handed the letters and papers to Bessie, who read them through and returned them.

"Why have you remained way from me so long, Gerald?"

"My duties have been such that I could not come. The death of my partner and the absence of Calvert Forrester, have kept me at work night and day."

"Gerald, forgive me. I will never doubt you again. I believed you untrue to me, and I was determined to satisfy myself on that point, and——"

"And what, silly child?"

"I would have killed her."

A look of fiendish hate flashed in the woman's face as she spoke and Gerald Grey felt to anger her, to arouse her jealous nature, was to apply a match to powder.

"Now, Bessie, I wish you to return to town. I will accompany you for some distance, as this is a lonely road, and you have just had some experience of its dangers. You had better take the night train to New York, as, if we were to go to the hotel together now, having come alone, it would only excite suspicion, and that I wish to avoid. I may be detained several days, for I know not how poor Mrs. Forrester will take the sad news I bring, as she was wholly wrapped up in her husband. Will you be a good girl, and do as I wish, Bessie?"

"Yes, Gerald, if you will forgive my doubt of you."

"You are already forgiven. I am glad to see you love me so much. Come."

Half an hour after Bonnie Bessie was riding slowly along to town, considerably crestfallen by the result of her jealous fears, and Gerald Grey was swiftly galloping in the direction of Riverside Cottage, his face black with angry passion.

Maud Forrester sat upon the cottage piazza, listening to the singing of the birds, the low of the cattle wending their way from the pasture to the barnyard, and gazing at the setting sun, whose rosy tints caused the gliding river to look like a stream of molten gold.

Her face was full of joy, for in her hand was an open letter.

It bore the postmark of China, and it was from Calvert telling her of his voyage, and how soon he hoped to be home.

Presently her eyes fell on a horseman coming at a gallop along the road, and the well-known form was recognized at a glance.

"It is Mr. Grey! Ah! how good of him to come and see me. What a noble man he is," and, dreading no evil tidings, Maud ran down to the gate to meet her visitor.

"Oh, Mr. Grey, I am so glad to see you; it is so kind of you to come," and Maud clasped both of his hands and looked up into his face.

Gerald Grey brought all of his iron will to his aid and tried hard to show no shadow of ill tidings in his face, but it was useless—the muscles were hard drawn about the mouth, the eyes held a strong stare, and the features were rigid, the face livid.

"Oh, heavens, Mr. Grey! are you ill, or has aught happened to you of evil? Oh, say it quickly, for the love of God! Do you bring bad news from Calvert?"

The small hands clenched his arm with earnest force, and the large eyes gazed straight into his face, but still the man spoke not, his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

"Gerald Grey, speak! Has evil befallen my husband?" and the voice was cold, stern and commanding.

Then the man spoke out, a mighty effort of will brought self-control, and he said, earnestly:

"Would to Heaven, my poor Maud, that other lips than mine must give the bitter blow to your happiness. Yes, evil has befallen poor Calvert."

"What evil?" and the face was as white as snow.

"He is dead, Maud."

"Dead! Calvert dead! Oh, Gerald Grey, unsay those cruel words, and I will kneel at your feet and bless you."

The hands were outstretched, the face raised in an agony of entreaty, and the form trembling like an aspen leaf, bent forward, a beautiful picture of a woman in despair.

"Would to Heaven I could unsay all, but I cannot. Your husband was murdered in Australia."

One loud shriek went forth, the grief of a heart in one cry that threatened to still forever its beating, and Maud swooned away.

Gerald Grey caught her quickly in his arms and saved her from falling, and bore her into the cottage, where the anxious mother and father met him.

A few rapid words told all, and while her parents carried her to her bed, Gerald Grey sprang on his horse and rode with the speed of the wind for Doctor Wilde, who lived two miles distant.

Never before had Doctor Wilde's horse, old Toby, even in his early days, made better time than he did between home and Riverside Cottage, for Gerald Grey urged the two animals on at breakneck speed, for he felt that Maud's life hung in the balance.

Throwing themselves from their horses, the two men entered the room where Maud lay, still in a deep swoon.

Doctor Wilde shook his head—always a sign of ill-omen in a man of medicine—and at once set to work with energy to revive the unconscious woman.

At length he was successful, the blood once more flowed through the veins; but like a torrent burst loose,and Maud went from unconsciousness into delirium.

Long days she remained turning in fever, and in her delirium calling on Calvert to come back to her, or she would die.

And through all these days her parents, Doctor Wilde, and Gerald Grey worked over her, striving all in their power to bring her back to reason and to life.

At length the crisis came and passed.

Maud awoke to reason; her fever was gone, and she had only her deep grief to combat with.

This grief she hugged to her heart with tenacious love; it was all she had of her poor husband.

When strong enough she heard from the lips of Gerald Grey all that had occurred an dhe read to her the letters and newspaper articles on the death of her husband.

Then he said, gently:

"Here is the ring, Maud; the one I gave him. It was taken from his hand after death. It was all the murderers left him. Take and wear it."

"No; you wear it. You gave it to him and he wore it; you will seem dearer to me with that ring on your finger,and I sadly need your friendship now."

The words were simple—the words of a woman in deepest distress to one who, next to her husband, had been her best friend.

But they burned deep into the heart of Gerald Grey, and into his face came again that unfathomable look.

With her own hand Maud placed the ring upon Gerald's little finger of the left hand, and, too much moved to trust himself to speak, the man turned away.

The next day he left for New York, promising to return again ere very long.

CHAPTER XX.

Though ashamed of her doubt of Gerald Grey, Bonnie Bessie's jealous nature only slumbered, and even while swearing to have faith in her husband, she could not but feel most nervous at his continued stop at the house of Maud Forrester.

True, he had written her of the terrible blow it had been to the wife to hear of the husband's sad death, and told her how the life of Maud hung by a mere thread, and he must remain to know if she lived or died, upon business reasons, as well as from friendship, for, of course, he would have to take charge of Calvert's effects.

"This is all very true, but I need him, too," the jealous woman would say, and then she would work herself into a fever by gazing upon Maud's photograph, which was in Gerald's album, and picture to herself her husband bending over her sick bed.

"She is too beautiful a woman for any man to nurse, without falling in love with. It's dangerous work, this comforting a pretty young widow, and I don't half like it," and Bessie would weep her pretty eyes nearly out.

At length her tears ceased, and as the days passed away, and still Gerald did not return, she suddenly made up her mind to a new course of action; she would leave the cottage and the man she now believed untrue to her.

At length, when Gerald Grey did return to New York, and run out to his Jersey cottage, he found the bird had flown—Bonnie Bessie had left the week before, the servants told him; but she had left a letter on his desk for him.

Gerald Grey at once sought consolation from that letter, but found none.

It was brief and to the point, reading:

"The Cottage, Thursday. Gerald: Being now convinced of your unfaithfulness, I leave your roof forever. I will try to live an honest life, but if I end in a den of infamy, upon your soul rests my life. You need not try to find me, for that would be impossible. Farewell. Your deserted

"Bessie."

"I am the one deserted, I think—the jealous creature. No matter what I may feel, my actions have certainly given her no cause for jealousy."

Still muttering to himself, Gerald Grey arose and paced the room, his brain busy, his heart on fire.

The next day the Jersey cottage was shut up and left in the care of the servants, and the following night Gerald Grey sat in a box at the opera, as calmly indifferent as though his whole life had not been one wild tumult.

As he listened to the sweet warbling of the prima donna, as she soared through the beauties of Trovadore, a sudden idea seized on him, and calling an usher, he sent his card to some one behind the scenes.

A boy, with dark face and fiery eyes, standing in the upper gallery, saw the act, for his eyes had been constantly on Gerald Grey, and he saw, also, a tiny note brought back by the usher.

With staring eyes he beheld Gerald Grey read the missive, and then caught a glance and a smile that passed between him and the prima donna as she reappeared upon the stage.

Before the curtain went down on the last act, Gerald Grey arose and left his box and the youth in the gallery quickly descended to the street door.

Gerald Grey came out, called to a hackman, and bade him go round to the stage entrance and await his coming; then he sauntered back into the opera house.

The boy heard the order and at once went to the designated spot, and in a free and easy way addressed the coachman.

Pompey was at first inclined to be uncommunicative; but a good-sized bill forced into his hand by the youth quickly unlocked his jaws and warmed his heart toward the giver.

"What dis for, boy?" he asked, with interest.

"I wish to have a ride on your box with you. If the gentleman objects, tell him I am the son of your employer, and ask him to let me ride—that I will not be in his way."

"What you want do dis for?"

"That is none of your business. See, I gave you five dollars to open your mouth and now I give you five more to close it and say nothing."

"All right, boy; I guess I'se a dumb nigger, kase I can't talk—he, he," and he pocketed his second present with a smile of intense satisfaction and the youth mounted the box alongside the ebony coachman.

Now, Gerald Grey had simply done a polite act—asked the fair prima donna, whom he had met on several occasions before, to drive to Delmonico's with him for supper.

The invitation had been accepted, for singers of any merit are proverbially hungry and thirsty, and when the fair songstress had changed her stage costume for a street dress, she was led out by Gerald Grey to the carriage.

Perhaps it was on account of the crowded rooms at the great restauranteur's, perhaps on account of the staring that his lovely and famous friend would be subjected to, that Gerald Grey went to a private parlor and there enjoyed a tete-a-tete supper.

It was an hour before they descended and entered the carriage, and all this time the boy on the coach had uttered no reply to the numerous questions put to him by Pompey, who was inclined to be sociable.

But the boy who had paid ten dollars for a ride on the box with a negro coachman, did not consider that he was expected to be entertaining.

Leaving Delmonico's, the carriage drove to the hotel of the musical star, and here Gerald would have left her had she not said in one of her sweetest voices:

"Come in for half an hour; it is early yet."

Of course, Gerald Grey went in and as he crossed the threshold a sound as of gritted teeth came from between shut lips.

"You break yer teeth, chile, if yer do dat," volunteered the negro.

"Hold your infernal tongue!"

"Yes, sah," and Pompey lapsed into silence. He feared he had a crazy person by his side, and he dreaded him accordingly.

As the hands of an illuminated clock pointed to one, Gerald Grey came out of the hotel, sprang into the carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive him home, giving him the number.

Pompey was paid liberally for his services, and the hack rolled away.

A square from the door of Gerald Grey's quarters the youth said suddenly:

"Now, drive like wild to the upper end of the town; here is more money for you. Serve me faithfully and I will double what I have given you."

"All right, sah; whar shall I drive?" said Pompey, his respect for his strange companion rising according to the money he received.

Then a new idea struck the negro, and he said, suspiciously:

"Dis hain't counterfeit money, am it?"

"No; you fool. What good would it do me to give you counterfeit money? Go on, as fast as you can drive, out Third avenue, and if you like gold better, I will pay you in that."

"That settled it, and Pompey surprised his horses at the rate of speed to which he forced them.

A half hour's hard driving and they drew up at the old row of deserted houses where Gerald Grey had been treacherously led by Big Angel.

"Await me here, I will return in ten minutes," and the youth entered the old house, after giving a peculiar knock that at once opened the door.

In less than ten minutes he returned, and with him were two men.

"Now, Pompey, I wish you to drive rapidly back to the place you just left the gentleman, and while we go along I will explain to you what I wish you to do. See, I have here the sum of one hundred dollars in gold—five twenty-dollar gold pieces. See them glitter! Well, all this I will give you if you do as I wish."

"You hain't gwine ter kill me, is yer?"

"No."

"Nor drown me, sah?"

"No; I merely wish you to bear a message for me."

"I'll do it, sah. Den you give me de money?"

"Yes; here it is now."

The negro chuckled, and drove on at a high rate of speed until he drew rein at the door of Gerald Grey's bachelor quarters. Here he dismounted and leaving the reins in the boy's hands ascended the brown stone steps and knocked loudly at the door.

Peter, the valet, soon appeared in response and the negro told him he must at once see Mr. Grey.

Gerald had not retired; he had been pacing his room in deep thought ever since his return.

"Well, sir, what do you want? Ah, you are the man who drove me tonight. Did I not pay you enough?"

"Yes, sah, and more, too; but I've come fer yer to go to de hotel whar de primmer donny lib—she am very sick, and wish to see you quick."

"What's the matter with her?" quickly asked Gerald.

"Dunno, sah, 'cepting de supper she eat tonight didn't agree wid her constitooshun."

"And she sent for me? This is strange."

"Yes, sah; you see, my stand is at the hotel, and de night porter comed out and tole me to come for you, de lady was very ill; and I'm to fetch two doctors, too, and I will stop for you as I come back, sah."

"All right, I will be ready."

The negro disappeared, and mounting his box the carriage rolled away. In fifteen minutes he again drew before the door, and a muffled figure came out and sprang in.

Once more the vehicle rattled over the cobblestones, drowning a stifling cry from within the carriage, which seemed to sway to and fro more violently than the smoothness of the street pavement would warrant.

When the carriage rolled away from Gerald Grey's door, two men sat on the front seat, who, the moment that the newcomer sunk upon the back cushions, leaned forward and seized him with giant strength.

One rough hand was pressed hard over his nose, another clutched the throat firmly, and the arms were pinioned, yet not without a desperate struggle that came so near victory for the assailed that one of the assailants said, quickly:

"Knife him, pard, or he'll get us hung yet."

The man addressed as "pard" quickly obeyed, it seemed, for he gave a short, upward thrust, and the light of the street lamp glittered on something he held in his hand.

CHAPTER XXI.

There was a low moan, a writhing of the form, and then no further need of strength—a murder had been committed in the very streets of New York and the eye of many a wayfarer, turned upon the rapidly moving hack, little imagined what a tragedy was being enacted therein.

For some moments after the murder no one spoke in the hack, which continued its rapid way along, those on the box little dreaming that the horses were drawing a dead body.

At length one of the men spoke—a man with one arm, and his voice was hoarse and full of passion.

"At last, at last! curse you, Gerald Grey! I am avenged! Thrice before have I had you in my power, and you escaped. Once I shot down a man strange like you, and whom I believed to be you—but I was mistaken; again, I shot a man, fooled by his white horse, and it was not you. But you came near giving me my revenge by being hung as his murderer. Then I had you in my own den, and yet you escaped. But now I have you, and we are even—yes, my knife has at last pierced your heart. I did not wish to kill you here; I had made up my mind to give you a sight of my face, that you might see who it was that had dogged you these long years; but you struggled so I was forced to use my knife—it is as well."

In a calm, cold voice the man had spoken, his only hand resting upon the forehead of his victim.

Presently the carriage drew up at the old row of cottages, and the one-armed man said, quickly:

"Don't tell that he is dead until we get him inside, or there'll be a scene here—say he's bound and gagged."

"All right; cover up his head; now come."

Quietly the two men descended from the carriage, bearing the cloaked form between them, and they hastened toward the house, while the youth turned to the coachman and said, sternly:

"If you say one word of this night's work I will have you sought out and killed."

"Lordy, massa, dis nigger ain't gwine to say one word; he don't know nuffin'. I'm obleeged to yer, sah; good night, sah," and Pompey drove away at a rapid pace, feeling that he had not been engaged in a very praiseworthy work that night; but the gold and bills in his pocket helped to quiet his conscience, and to still it the more he turned into his employer ten dollars as the result of his night's work, where under other circumstances he would not have paid over one-half that amount.

Hastening on after his companions, the youth entered the house and ascended the dark stairway to a far interior room.

Here were a dozen men and the body had just been laid on the floor by the bearers.

"Great heavens! Is he dead? Have you killed him?" cried the youth, as he saw the motionless form.

"Yes; his days are ended," rudely said one of the men.

"Oh, God, Thou knowest I meant not this! Men—murderers—you shall rue this night's work! You have killed him! you have killed him!"

With a cry of mingled rage and grief, the youth threw himself down beside the still form and dragged the cloak from his face.

A cry of wild delight burst from the boy's lips—a yell like a wild beast came from the man with one arm.

"This is not Gerald Grey!" cried the one-armed man.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! he tricked you after all! This is his valet," suddenly changing from despairing grief to exultant joy.

It was true. Gerald Grey had not been the victim, but the white, scared face of poor Peter was revealed to the astonished murderers.

Gerald Grey was a shrewd reader of character, and when Pompey put in an appearance for him at such an unseasonable hour, he became at once suspicious, for the negro's manner was not self-possessed—the money in his pocket aided to his playing a part not in the program of his daily life, "beflustered him," as he expressed it.

When Pompey said he would go for two doctors and stop on his way back, Gerald Grey was the more convinced that there was some plot on hand to get him into a trap.

Hence, as soon as Pompey left the room, Gerald turned to his valet and said:

"Peter, I wish you to do me a favor, and I will give you two months' wages for it."

"I am ready, sir," said the delighted Peter.

"Well, throw on my coat and hat; you are about my size, and when that carriage returns, run out and jump in. Do not speak, except in a low tone. If the carriage does not stop at the Metropolitan Hotel, simply ask where they are going, and appear satisfied with their reply. If they put you out at the Metropolitan, elude them in some way and await my coming in the reading room. If they carry you on, I will be near you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

While Gerald Grey had been talking he had been drawing on a heavy storm coat and buckling a belt containing two revolvers around his waist.

This done, he put on a slouch hat, and hurriedly left the house.

Passing a hack stand, he sprang into a waiting vehicle, and ordered another to follow him.

Five minutes after he was put down at a police station, and in a little while emerged therefrom accompanied by seven policemen. They all got into carriages, which at once drove away.

Halting at the Metropolitan, Gerald found, agreeable to his expectations, that Pompey had not appeared, so he gave the order to drive to his own quarters. Here he dismounted and went in. Peter had gone.

"Now, drive with all your speed, coachman," and giving him directions, Gerald Grey sprang again into the vehicle.

"Perhaps, after all," he thought, "I may be on a wild goose chase; the devils may have moved their den; still, I know they intended a trap for me, for the hotel clerk distinctly told me that mademoiselle was not ill; but I am started now, and I'll hunt these fellows down."

In half an hour the carriage drew up near the designated spot, and Gerald and his squad of policemen dismounted, and walked cautiously toward the door.

All was dark and quiet within, but a skeleton key soon opened the door, through which Gerald Grey had so nearly passed to his death some time before

With the aid of a bull's-eye lantern the passage was traversed, the stairs ascended, and then loud voices were heard to guide them further.

The plan of attack was arranged that they were to knock at door, and when opened, rush in.

Gerald Grey tapped lightly upon the door, and instantly silence fell within.

Again he tapped and a step was heard, a bolt was withdrawn, and the door half opened.

Instantly the party rushed in, their revolvers drawn. A dozen men, wild-eyed, haggard-looking, burly fellows, were there, gathered around a dead form beside which knelt a youth of scarcely more than seventeen.

Though taken by surprise, the band of robbers threw themselves at once, upon the defensive, one of them firing a shot that brought down a policeman.

Behind the smoke of that shot he seized the youth with his one arm, and dragged him through a half-open door at his back.

Then followed a few rapid shots, clubbing, cursing, cries of pain for quarter, and Gerald Grey and his policemen held the post.

The denizens of the place were quickly handcuffed, a guard left over them, and a search made through the old rookery.

Other prisoners, both male and female, were taken, and plenty of plunder was found; but in some mysterious way, the one-armed leader of the robber band and the youth had escaped.

As the dawn lighted up the east, Gerald Grey returned to his lonely quarters, feeling deep sorrow for poor Peter, yet having that sorrow tinged with congratulations at his own lucky escape.

Sending a telegram out to Jersey cottage to John to come in at once and step into poor Peter's shoes, Gerald threw himself upon his bed to seek rest.

But every time he closed his eyes there came before him the vision of that youth—the one he had seen on the box with Pompey—the one he had caught a glimpse of in the robbers' den, and seen dragged quickly out of the room by one whose face he felt he had also seen before.

But strive as he would to sleep, Gerald Grey could not; that youth would float before his eyes, until suddenly the mystery was solved; he knew that it was none other than Bonnie Bessie.

At this revelation his face turned a shade paler: he knew that he now had a revengeful woman on his track. Men he could meet like a man, but a woman—a wronged one—he felt would be a terrible Nemesis.

CHAPTER XXII.

When Bonnie Bessie left Jersey Cottage she had not fully determined upon her future course.

She was one of those wild, passionate creatures that love with heart, soul and body, and in giving all to the object of her love she expected all in return.

Though she could really get no clew against Gerald Grey of any unfaithfulness to her, her jealous nature caused her to surmise all manner of things, and, convinced that he was untrue to her, she left her home.

In her portemonnaie she had a good supply of funds—money she had brought with her the night she left her uncle's protection, so she was in no fear of want.

But she arrived in New York late at night and such a feeling of loneliness came over her that she acted at once upon impulses, sprang into a hack and gave the driver the address of her destination.

It was the den where her uncle had lived

Arriving near the spot, she paid the coachman, dismounted from the vehicle, and with her valise in hand, walked to the side door, the same through which she and Gerald Grey had made their exit.

The old signal she knew well, and the rap resounded loudly upon the door, which was opened by one whom she knew well—a man with one arm.

He started at sight of her, glanced over her shoulder, as if expecting to see a dozen policemen at her back, and dropped his one hand upon a revolver in his belt.

"You here?" he exclaimed, almost savagely.

"Yes; I have no home now; I have come back."

"No home! I remember that you have—a mere pretense," said the man gruffly

"No, Gerald Grey was untrue to me, and I left him"

"And you have come back here to live?"

"Yes; I wish your aid in tracking him. If I find him untrue to me, I will kill him"

"No; that is my duty; I have sworn it. But I will help you. I am chief here, now that your uncle is dead; but I'll forgive you, though see here," and the men held up the stump of his left arm, which had been cut off above the elbow.

"I see; you have but one arm."

"True, and you are the cause."

"Me!"

"Yes; your shot shattered the bone. You remember that day in Jersey, don't you?"

"Yes; I am very sorry now; but I was glad then. I shot to kill you."

"And came very near doing it. But, come in, Bonnie Bessie; your old room is just as you left it. We ran off a few days after your flight, expecting the brass buttons to swoop down upon us; but we came back as soon as we found you had not played traitor or allowed Grey to do so. Come, I will take you to your old quarters, and then tell the boys you are back again.

Ten minutes after Bonnie Bessie found herself once more in her old room, pleasant, well-furnished and comfortable.

Throwing herself on the bed she tried hard to sleep; but past memories crowded thickly upon her, banishing slumber.

The following morning she sauntered out on a shopping excursion, and returning home with her purchases, she quickly metamorphosed herself into a respectable-looking youth of sixteen, for the wealth of raven hair was cut off to further complete her disguise—a disguise she had often assumed in her earlier years to aid her uncle in some scheme.

Having thus metamorphosed herself, Bonnie Bessie set out to dog the steps of Gerald Grey, for she had a spy inform her when he returned to the city.

How, after a financial transaction with Pompey, she made that gentleman's acquaintance, and put a plan in execution to get Gerald Grey into her power, the kind reader has already seen.

Now, in thus, as she believed, getting possession of Gerald Grey, Bonnie Bessie had [illegible] Her idea was to have [illegible] power, then accuse him of unfaithfulness and act according to what she believed after she had heard all from him.

But, in this affair of hers, she overlooked the circumstance of the one-armed leader of the robbers, who had a score to settle with the merchant and was equally anxious to get possession of Gerald Grey.

Finding him in, as she felt, criminal intimacy with the beautiful songstress, Bonnie Bessie acted with a promptness that was the result of her wild jealousy, and laid her plans with skill and rapidity

But when she found that she had been tricked, and that Gerald Grey had outwitted her, her fury knew no bounds, though mingled with it was a secret joy that poor Peter and not Gerald had been the one slain.

Surprised by the police, shortly after, led on by Gerald Grey, Bonnie Bessie would have been taken, had not the one-armed leader quickly dragged her from the room and hence along a passage that led them to her own chamber.

"Get what duds you want, quick! for we must get out of this!" said the man, and Bonnie Bessie hastily set to work collecting what baggage she could carry with her.

"Can you not get some of your own things?" she asked.

"Have got all I have to carry on my back; my money and clothes I have on is enough luggage for a feller who has to make sudden trips," laughed One-Arm.

A few moments were sufficient for Bessie to collect the articles she most needed, and the two left the house by the garden door, while the posse of police were searching high and low.

"Where are you going?" asked Bonnie Bessie, as they left the garden and turned into a deserted street.

"I've got a friend who lives some distance from here; he's got several vacant rooms, and we'll lodge with him for the present."

Bonnie Bessie made no reply, but trudged silently on with her companion until they at length came to an isolated house—once one of the grand old houses of the Knickerbockers.

It was situated in the center of a square, and a garden and orchard, overgrown and wholly neglected, surrounded it.

"Here's where Sherman lives, and you'll find him a brick, you will. You see, he comes of a good family, was fast, raised the devil generally, got disinherited, forged his father's name, and escaped from the prison where they sent him. He was once a clerk under your husband."

This piece of information regarding the host they were seeking, the man gave at the door, while they were waiting for their knock to be answered.

In a few minutes a voice from within asked:

"Who comes?"

"A Knickerbocker."

"Where from?"

"Devil Den."

The answers seemed to be satisfactory, for the bolts were removed, and the door opened.

The passage was dimly lighted; but the man who opened the door conducted his visitors into a room on the right hand of the hall.

Here a bright light burned, but no ray of it could be seen without.

It was a strange-looking room, large, furnished quaintly, and with a piano and artist's easel in one corner, while paintings and crayon drawings, finished and half-finished, hung upon the walls. The occupant was evidently a genius—and that occupant stood by the side of Bonnie Bessie, whose eyes now fell upon him in the bright light of the room.

The girl started and turned deadly pale, the man gave a start of recognition and flushed scarlet.

"Mr. Sherman! Do I meet you here?" cried Bessie in surprise.

"Yes these are my quarters," said the young man.

"You, a clergyman, the friend of this man?" said Bonnie Bessie, meaning her one-armed companion as this man."

"I am an artist, a musician, a clerk—in fact, Mrs. Grey, a universal genius. When you last saw me I was the Rev. Dr. Sherman," lightly said the man

"And you are not a minister?" asked Bessie, her face becoming livid with passion.

"No—only when it pays to be one."

"Did Gerald Grey know this?" again asked the girl, almost in a whisper.

"He did. I worked with him once, but he caught me in some little irregularities, and did not send me to jail as he ought to have done. He knew my caliber, and when he wanted a man to do dirty work for him, he sought me. But, believe me, Mrs. Grey—"

"Don't call me Mrs. Grey!" shrieked Bessie, her heart almost crushed

"I will not; but I have always regretted that [illegible]-binding, as she believed, a true woman to a villain. I have taken life. I have done many evil things, but that one [illegible] haunted me. See, I will prove [illegible] that your sweet face has always been before me. I did this from memory."

As the man spoke, he threw aside a curtain, and the act revealed an unfinished painting.

It was a likeness of Bonnie Bessie painted from memory, it is true, yet exceedingly true to life, and well executed.

One thought flashed through the mind of Bonnie Bessie—the man who did this must love her, even though he had seen her but once.

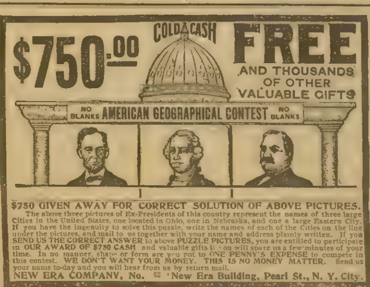
Overcome by her emotion, her grief, her fierce anger, against Gerald Grey, Bonnie Bessie threw herself upon a lounge and burst into a violent fit of weeping

Several days passed away, and Bonnie Bessie did not once leave her new quarters in the old Knickerbocker mansion. A pleasant room on the top floor had been given her, and here she passed the time in threats of vengeance against Gerald Grey.

Ross Sherman, her host, gave her the papers, lauding Gerald Grey to the skies for his brave attack on the robbers' den, and congratulating him on his lucky escape from death; but poor Peter they seemed to overlook; he had been but an instrument with which to save the rich merchant, Gerald Grey

Nor were the papers all that Ross Sherman brought to Bonnie Bessie, for he supplied her with all kinds of delicacies, and

(Continued on page [illegible])



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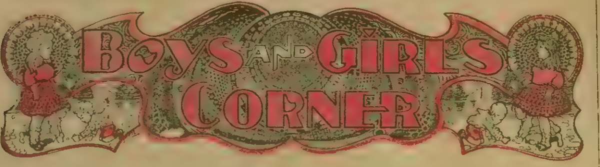

By
St. George Rathborne.

Adrift on a Junk; Or, Boy Sailors of the China Sea.

Begun in No. 29, July 18. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be procured from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD TRICK OF THE PEARL DIVERS.

The discovery connected with the strange disappearance of the fat Chinaman filled Merriwether with apprehension, for it threatened to bring disaster to the plans which they had begun to believe were at least in a fair way toward achieving success.

There was considerable of a commotion aboard that old junk about this time, Bob running one way, his friend another, while the mate took it upon himself to scan the surface of the water around the vessel, in the hope that if their bulky prisoner of war had taken it into his head to go overboard he might not yet have passed beyond the range of a pair of keen eyes.

Kwang Chow remained at his post beside the now useless tiller, smoking his pipe, having actually discovered some treasure below, that, to Merriwether, had the suspicious odor of opium. Just as the old mate was hurying past the old waterman it occurred to him that as Kwang had been on deck the whole time he might know something about the disappearance of the other; so, without much hope of success he turned on him, asking in the Chinese dialect, which of course he had picked up during the long years of his captivity:

"Where is the fat one? We want him very bad."

Kwang Chow looked as though he were in a trance, his yellow face expressing nothing but serene contentment.

"It is very important that we find him; he will go to his people and tell them we are here," continued the mate; but Kwang merely puffed out a tiny ring of smoke, and allowed one of his eyelids to tremble.

"They will then come upon us. I shall be recaptured, you will be made a pirate, Julian will be killed or kept as a slave all his life."

That last was quite sufficient to arouse Kwang, for, strange to say, up to this moment he had not viewed the situation in this light, or considered the dreadful result as concerned his young master.

He became galvanized with sudden life; one eye opened, and then the other, his jaw dropped, allowing the pipe to fall to the deck, and then he gave utterance to a low cry.

"Him over dere!" he said, motioning toward the side of the junk, and Merriwether knew from this that he had seen the other climb the rail with the intention of escaping, possibly giving some mystic sign of the guild that had the effect of binding poor Kwang's lips with secrecy until that moment when he was assured that the escape of the prisoner meant the worst of disasters to his beloved young master, when he had burst the bonds of superstition, and informed on the fat one

The mate knew the case was one requiring extreme haste rather than anything else, and he accordingly sprang to the side with the expectation of making a discovery; nor was he wrong in this surmise, for the very first thing his eyes beheld was the upturned face of the Celestial elephant, staring at him from out of the water, his fat body being wholly immersed.

Doubtless this apparition of Merriwether was about the last thing Falstaff hoped to see, for at the sight his saffron countenance took on an expression of absolute terror.

Then his hands let go their hold, and the water closed over the Chinaman, pigtail and all.

It was plain to the sturdy mate what his scheme might be, for his eye could detect his passage through the sea water by the bubbles that arose, just as he had many a time pursued a giant alligator in the Florida bayous through the same telltale means.

Now, Ajax Merriwether was a man who did his acting first and puzzled out the whys and wherefores later on, when the object had been accomplished; so, being brought face to face with a difficulty, he, like Alexander, cut the Gordian knot without scruple.

In this urgent case he simply waited three seconds to throw off his ragged coat shoes he did not have to bother about, being barefooted at the time; and with one last look to make sure concerning the direction taken by his expected quarry he sprang squarely over the side of the junk.

He dropped into the water head first, with the grace of a frog, and disappeared temporarily from sight, so that Julian running up at the splash was unable to discover any sign of him, and turned upon the speechless Kwang for some light.

Meanwhile, as was to be expected, Falstaff had come to the surface, for it was with the greatest difficult in the world that such a life-buoy of fat ever sank at all; he turned a startled glance over his shoulder, doubtless suspecting that he would be followed, and having possibly heard the splash that marked the plunge of the lanky ex-mate over the side of the junk.

Just then Merriwether's head shot above the surface in his wake, and propelled by his lusty strokes, his body began to move toward the escaping Chinaman with considerable rapidity

Now began a race that possessed all the elements of a comedy to those on the boat, although it was a serious enough business to the wretched chap who puffed and spouted water, who swam hither and yon, seeking to gain by his knowledge of the currents, but without any success, and who finally tried to dive, but was unable to drag his corpulent frame under the surface, such appearing to be the floating propensities of the fat with which it was clothed.

Julian grinned and Bob roared under his breath, for he went through all the extravagant gestures of one who was enjoying a glorious laugh, even if little sound escaped his lips; for it was hilariously funny, to them.

Merriwether kept gaining all the time, a little here and more on this tack, following with the grim determination that marks the pursuit of the gaunt gray wolf of the Siberian steppes when on the scent of his anticipated prey.

Perhaps the wretched Falstaff would have shrieked aloud in his terror, in the faint hope that his voice might reach the ears of friends who frequented some of the passages among the islands, but what with his exertions, together with the amount of salt water which he had unwittingly swallowed in his immersion, he was not in a condition to utter a sound above a grunt like that of a spouting porpoise.

Unable to remain below the surface of the water, and thus cheat Merriwether of his triumph, he realized that he must eventually give in, and accept what fate might have in store for him.

It had evidently been his ambition to reach the shore at a certain point, where there appeared to be a chance to scramble up the face of the rise; but the quick pur[illegible] by his [illegible] together with the [illegible] cross[illegible] his [illegible] [illegible]ing out this plan.

While the sky was still overcast, the rain had in a great measure ceased, and the morning having advanced, it was possible to see with some degree of certainty the length of the lagoon in which the junk now lay at anchor.

Accordingly Julian was able to cast an occasional nervous glance over the surface in search of signs that might indicate the presence of a shark, for he knew full well how general such piratical customers were in these waters connected with the warm China Sea.

To his horror he suddenly detected a sword-like fin darting energetically hither and thither as though the man-eater had determined that something was going on in which he had a vital interest; and even as Julian looked he saw the fin begin to move straight toward the spot where the two parties struggled in the tideway.

Prudence was the last thing that occurred to the young fellow just then, and had it been possible to have accomplished anything he would have fired at the monster; he did raise his voice and shout:

"A shark, Merriwether, a shark, just behind you, man!"

He saw the lanky ex-mate turn his head and leisurely survey the situation, nor could he detect aught of alarm upon his hairy face, though by this time the piratical tax-gatherer was close by, and forging ahead with considerable speed.

Merriwether had seen something of the kind before, and did not possess the same feeling of horror toward the breed that gave Julian such a chill.

He threw up his right arm, and those on the junk saw as he had intended, that he held something tightly gripped between his fingers, with this he waved toward them, as much as to say there was really little cause for worry.

"That's one of my knives, a ripper, too, such as they use in the South Sea Islands. I think he means to stick Mr. Shark just as I've seen natives do it at the pearl fisheries," declared Bob, with admiration and awe in his voice.

Julian immediately judged this was the correct solution of the matter, and while the coolness of the mate allayed his fears to some extent, still he realized what the consequence of an accident must be, and held his breath more or less in suspense while the thing was being enacted.

It did not take long, for that monster of the sea was hungry, and not in the habit of delaying his feeding when the opportunity came to hand.

Had the shark been ahead so that the fat Chinaman became the object of his solicitude, possibly he might have secured his breakfast, for Falstaff was in no condition to make the least resistance; but it was a different matter when the hungry monster attacked the lanky mate, for in that worthy he met his match.

Just when Julian's heart was, so to speak, in his mouth, for he feared it must be all up with Merriwether, who had possibly waited too long, he saw that the mate's head no longer remained in sight above the surface, and a cry of horror broke from his lips.

"It's all right," burst out Bob, as if to relieve his harrowed feelings, "he's only sunk to tackle the old chap underneath; there, look, what did I tell you! That was a slasher, now, and gave Mr. Shark the toothache, sure as pop. Come, there's no use making so much fuss about it, old chap, since you would have it, you know, only the shoe is on the other foot now. Ouch! how it does hurt! Probably he's gotten over being hungry now. And see, the water shows red even from here. Merriwether's the boy to lead the dance; only I hope the scent won't stir up half a dozen other chaps of the same sort."

Bob was brimming over with excitement and admiration; but it remained for Julian to see where they might be of some assistance to their friend.

He had noticed all that his companion spoke about, and understood that the cunning swimmer had dived under the shark at just the right second, giving an upward slash with his sharp blade that had opened a gap in the vitals of the big fish, causing him to flounder in agony, threshing the water after the manner of a steamer's propeller running wild.

"We must go to his assistance, Bob," was what Julian called.

He knew how it could be done, for they had found a small sampan in the lower part of the junk, in need of repairs, which Merriwether had managed to give at odd times, never dreaming that in so doing he might possibly be lengthening his stay in this same old world.

Bob saw what was in the bright mind of his fellow voyager, and being quick to take a hint, he sprang to help drag the mended boat from its shelter.

At another time they might have considered this a task hardly fitted for two pairs of hands; but such was the excitement attending the act now that they went at the job with an assurance bound to bring success.

Why, even the opium-dosed Kwang caught a little of the inspiration and lent a hand in the getting of the sampan over the side

Once this had been done, Julian seized a paddle and made a flying leap to board the small craft, already moving off, they having quite neglected to fasten her with a cable.

Luckily he landed safely within the boat, much to the relief of Tressie, who had come on deck to see what all this fuss might be about, and was just in time to witness his plunge over the side.

Once he began to work the stick, and Julian made that ancient sampan dig through the water at a great rate, heading straight for the spot where he could see Merriwether once more upon the surface, and sheering off a trifle so as not to come within too close a radius of the scene of the shark's dying struggles.

The fat Chink seemed to have quite lost his desire to escape, for all he did was to paddle helplessly here and there, waiting to be picked up, a look of abject woe upon his yellow face, for no matter whichever way he turned he seemed to be confronted with an impending fate.

The mate swam over and clapped a hand upon his shoulder, as though by this means giving him to understand that he might consider himself once more under arrest, which Julian thought was rather a dramatic windup to the incident.

Bob called out to the effect that he believed he had discovered some more sabre-like fins coming around the point of rocks, and that unless they hurried they would have to go through with the business of shark sticking again, which possibly Merriwether might not enjoy; but Julian was already bearing down on the twain that awaited his coming, treading water meanwhile, and the danger after all was remote.

The plucky as well as generous mate proceeded to help his prisoner over the stern of the sampan first of all, though Bob called out that the enemy had evidently scented blood, since both newcomers advanced rapidly toward the scene of hostilities.

Falstaff was difficult to get into the boat, but when Julian finally obtained a hold something had to come, and terror assisting the human elephant he managed to slide

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over the stern like a great log.

Then Merriwether deigned to pull himself aboard, though giving a glance at the approaching fins as though strongly tempted to accept the gage of battle which their presence seemed to have offered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO MEN IN A SAMPAN.

Once on board again the first thing Merriwether did was to fasten the fat Celestial in the hold, which in an emergency would serve in place of a lazaretto.

No doubt Falstaff had expected immediate decapitation, and when he found this was not to be his fate, he breathed an audible sigh of relief, and would have embraced the wet knees of his rescuer, had the mate been in a humor to permit any such nonsense.

As soon as the troublesome chap had been temporarily disposed of, our tired friends found a chance to talk over the situation.

The one thing that gave them the most anxiety lay in the fact that several times it had been found necessary to call aloud, and in the broadest English at that, which made it all the worse in case any of the allies chanced to be near by.

The splashing of the sea against the walls, together with the decreasing moan of the wind combined to make enough noise to have swallowed up the sound of a human voice, unless one happened to be very close by; so that they did not fear those upon the proa discovered behind the trees soon after the junk had dashed into the outermost passage.

Merriwether laid much stress on the fact that this retreat was seldom if ever visited b" those who scoured the vicinity; he believed it had a bad name among the allies, as being the home of some evil spirit whom they found reason to dread, and nothing could be better suited to their plans than that they should for the time being represent this same dragon.

For a time they remained on the alert, with what weapons they possessed in their hands ready for immediate use; but as time passed and nothing occurred to disturb their security, even Bob became reassured, and ventured the opinion that perhaps no one could have heard the shouts.

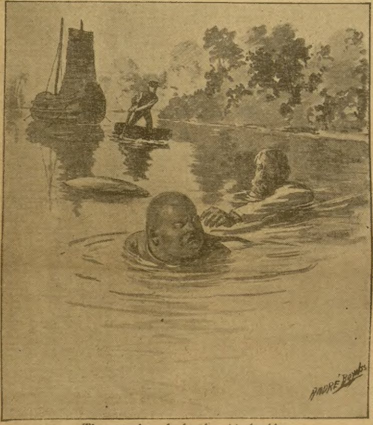
Accordingly they now set a watch, while the balance sought rest, so as to put themselves in the best possible shape for work, knowing that they had a desperate venture ahead of them.

By noon the sun peeped out, and made the surroundings look more cheerful. They were glad enough to see his smiling face, for the clouds hanging low overhead had seemed to depress their feelings, and be productive of all manner of gloomy prognostications.

As the afternoon began to wane, all of them were on deck, reclining as best they found opportunity, one in a hammock, another upon a coil of rope, which in Bob's eye was simply a luxurious seat, while Tressie had a stool, fetched from the cabin for this especial purpose.

Merriwether was telling them more about his life in the village of the pirates, and describing the lay of the land in the vicinity of the place, so that if anything happened to him, and the guidance of the expedition fell upon one of the lads, they might have at least a fair idea connected with what lay before them.

Thus he put them in possession of several facts that were likely to prove of value in case of an alarm; for long association had made him aware of the frailties of the butchers as well as their strong points, and it was diplomacy on his part to think of taking advantage of such weakness; just as of old a charging knight would delight to discover some flaw in the armor of his antagonist, where he might insert the point of a lance and bring about his downfall.



The mate clapped a hand on his shoulder.

Already had the sun passed out of sight behind the elevations that shut them in on all sides, and it would not be long before the shades of another night began to creep from their dens, choking the last gleams of light and plunging everything in darkness.

Some eerie bird of ill-omen croaked dismally amid the thickets ashore, and Bob took such an intense dislike to the thing that more than once he threatened to do it an injury; indeed, only the fear of bringing trouble down upon their own heads prevented him from taking the big gingal and putting off in the sampan on a trip of destruction.

Julian declared he could very easily see how the Chino-Malay inhabitants of the pirate village came to look upon this same region as haunted territory, for it certainly did possess some of the most ghostly attributes in the way of weird scenery, twisted trees, gaunt cliffs, hollow sounds, and various other side-shows calculated to chill the blood in the veins of those naturally given over to superstition.

He thought he himself would be happier in a more delightful place, and that he could easily dispense with these reminders of grim demons, dragons and the kind of pet hobbies peculiar to Chinamen in their native state.

While he lay there in the hammock, answering or asking questions, it seemed to Julian that several times his eye caught a fugutive glimpse of something that just flashed above the rail of the junk. First he concluded it was the shimmer of the sun on a little wavelet, for perhaps there might be something of a break in the hill-line, that allowed a parting peep at the declining god of day. A litttle consideration convinced him that this could not be the truth, either, and then in idle curiosity he wondered whether it might not be swift wing of a darting bird, skimming over the water in search of insect life, that had caught his eye in the passage.

When for the third time he caught the same flutter, he began to believe he could not have hit upon the true solution even with his second guess; dropping out of the hammock he crouched down low enough to be under the rail, and then to the surprise and consternation of Tressie, began to crawl forward.

He made a motion that begged for silence on her part, so that she sat still and simply watched his mysterious movements, as did the other two, though the mate smiled grimly as though he could give a shrewd guess concerning the nature of the mission that had taken the lad upon his hands and knees

When Julian reached the side of the junk he peered over; the mysterious spell of the gloaming lay upon the scene, and at such a time every little wavelet appears to shine with a singular light, as though tipped with silver hoar-frost; this is particularly true of warm latitudes, where the phosphorescence of the sea is most pronounced.

Those who were watching eagerly saw him start back, turn his head, and then motion to Merriwether to join him. Understanding that it must be something of considerable importance, Bob also dropped from his coil of rope, and began to wriggle his squatty frame over the deck, while the mate crawled on ahead.

"Peek over, carefully, sir," whispered Julian, when the ex-mate brushed up against his sleeve; and Merriwether hastened to do so, taking care not to expose himself any more than could be helped.

He immediately uttered a snort of disgust.

"Why, it's that miserable skunk of a Chink waving something out of that little bull'seye in the hold; consarn his picture, I do believe he's making signals of some sort," he muttered, in wrath.

"Yes; look over across the water," breathed Julian, who had had more time

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In the square below are a lot of figure 7s. They are all jumbled up and mixed together so that they are hard to count. The idea of the puzzle is to count the number of figures in the square. Every reader of this paper has a chance to win a prize. We know that very few persons will count the exact number, but we not only give prizes to the person who counts correctly but also to 1244 other persons who come nearest to the correct number. With this number of chances every person who answers this offer has a chance to get a prize. The person who counts the exact number of figures in the square gets $200, the person who comes the nearest gets $100, the next $50, the next $20, the next $10, and the next 1240 persons in the contest get presents, the average value of those presents is 50 cents each.

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By next nearest we mean the next nearest above or below the correct number. In case one person should send in a count of one more than actually correct and another sent in a count of one less than actually correct they would tie for the prize of next nearest, and so on with the next nearest. A tie for the prize means the prize will be divided equally among those who are tied for the prize.

The counts must be filled in on the blanks below. Write your count plainly, also your name and address. Send in your count as soon as you have made it. You may send in as many as you pay for according to the offer.

CONDITIONS.—Each person must count the number of 7s in this square and fill in the count in the proper space. For example, you will fill in "1st count 726," and if you send in four counts fill in the other spaces in the blank. No person employed by the WOMAN'S WORLD, or any resident of the city of Chicago is allowed to compete for the prizes. No one knows the number of 7s in the square. The count will not be made until after the first of January, 1904, when the figures will be counted by a committee and the correct answer will be given. Then all the counts sent in by subscribers will be compared and the prizes awarded. The paper and receipt will be sent as soon as possible. Remember that it takes some time to properly enter subscriptions, and to take care of the large mail we receive daily, so if you do not hear from us at once do not be alarmed. No counts will be changed after they are received by us. Remit by Post-office or Express order, or registered letter. Counts must be in our office before 6 p. m., December 31st, 1903. If you send 25 cents write your count in the first space. If you send 50 cents write a count in each of the four spaces. Twenty-five cents entitles you to one year's subscription and one count; 50 cents entitles you to four years' subscription and four counts. If you are already a subscriber your subscription will be extended. The subscription blank is made so that you can answer either for one or four counts. Cross out the word "four" if you send one count, or cross out the word "one" if you send four counts. Extra blanks will be furnished free upon request. Remember we are a responsible concern and that the prizes will be faithfully awarded; also remember there is no guess work about the matter. It is simply a test of patience and correctness.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

Each person answering this contest must fill in the blank below and state the number of figures in the square.

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1	*Prize next nearest*	50
1	*Prize next nearest*	20
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1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.

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for observations, and could give them pointers.

The mate quickly announced that he had made a discovery, for he blew his breath in a peculiar manner not unlike a low whistle.

"Our sampan adrift—is that rascal Kwang off again—no, no, it's another, and, bless my soul, if I don't see two chaps in the thing. Now they make a movement this way, and again hold back as if afraid. We are in for more trouble, I fear; but, first of all, I'm on to that yellow hippopotamus below. Luckily he hasn't coaxed 'em close enough to whisper, and his cake will be dough in about sixty seconds from now. Watch me jettison his cargo for him, that's all!" growling which, the lank mate shuffled off toward the opening that gave entrance to the lower regions of the native craft.

The others were not in a mood to pity poor Falstaff, since he had brought the trouble wholly upon his own head; indeed, just at that moment, when it began to look as though disaster threatened their plans again, they were in a mood to wish the fat pirate at the bottom of the sea.

Once, twice, thrice the fluttering scarf floated athwart their vision as they crouched there, watching the hovering sampan jealously, and then it came no more. They heard no sound of struggle, but understood that the Chinaman's cargo had indeed been duly jettisoned after Merriwether's peculiar style, and that the chances were twenty to one Falstaff was just then writhing and squirming under the sturdy if bony knee of the tall mate, who was burning with a righteous indignation concerning all this trouble which the treacherous rascal had given them.

At least the two in the sampan had not as yet taken the alarm, though it was easy to see they were in a frame of mind to fly at the first sign of anything out of the common.

By some accident, and not design, they had found their way into this mysterious region, supposed to be given up to goblins and spirits, and Julian had an idea they were lost, something in their actions proclaiming as much.

There the signal flaunted again. Ah! it must be Merriwether who waved now, and they could guess that his object was to attract the curious couple close to the junk, for some purpose of his own, looking to effecting their capture.

Our boys became more than ever excited, though this did not prevent them from handling their share of the affair with a steadiness that must have done credit to an old campaigner.

Bob was sent after the dreadful Chinese gun known as a gingal, which could be loaded at the breech, yet was of such enormous dimensions that it needed a giant to successfully handle it upon the open, though on board ship where the weight could be rested on some stationary object, a single person would be capable of discharging the same, if he did not mind a sore shoulder from the terrific impact of the recoil.

By degrees he managed to make the other understand what was up, and Kwang evinced considerable interest in the affair; perhaps he was secretly ashamed of the weakness which he had shown when Falstaff gave him the sign of the Crooked Frog, forcing him to lend passive aid to the escaping pirate; and he desired to wipe from the mind of his young and honored master any bad feeling toward him (Kwang Chow) that might have become lodged there.

Be that as it may, he expressed himself through various gestures as ready and eager to assist in the capture of the spies, and began to crawl after the lad to the side of the junk.

The fellows had now arrived at a point some twenty yards away from the vessel anchored in the cove, and they seemed to imagine that this was quite as near as caution dictated, for holding their boat against the current they began to call aloud in their own language, demanding to know how the Half-Moon, which they evidently recognized by her familiar marks, came to be in this dreadful place of the dragon when she was supposed to have gone down out at sea, her crew having reached shore.

Julian understood a few words of this, and could easily guess what the rest must be, so that he was soon primed and could tell Kwang what to say in return, in order to allay their suspicions.

The waterman from old Hongkong stood up and harangued the two fellows in the sampan with the unstudied grace of a natural orator. What he said Bob could not for the life of him tell, but he was able to guess its import, and watched anxiously to see what effect it had on the occupants of the strange sampan.

They consulted together, and then called out again, whereupon Kwang tried to reassure them, entering all sorts of plausible excuses for his presence on the junk, and vowing she had drifted into the channel between the islands; which thing was so very improbable on its face that the others could not swallow the story, and had more suspicions than ever that there was something uncanny about the Half-Moon.

Another chatter and they began to ply their paddles vigorously, but Julian noticed to his dismay that it was in a contrary way to what they should have done had they desired to approach the junk; which seemed to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that their fears had overpowered their desire to investigate the mystery further, and they were about to sheer away.

And yet, singularly, enough, the harder they plied their paddles, the closer the sampan seemed to move toward the anchored junk, as though the tide had become entirely too fierce for their resistance.

"Great Scott! It's Merriwether pushing from behind," whispered the excited Bob. "I declare I saw his head bob up just then over the stern, and the coves don't seem to suspect they've got a human propeller back yonder. Oh, this is rich; see 'em tug like the very Old Harry, yet they lose, foot by foot. You just bet they think they're in the clutches of the devil, sure. Get your gun, Johnny, and give it to 'em if both try to jump into the sea. Our good friend will take care of one, and better a little noise than to have the critters get off. What a pusher that fellow is, now. Shall we pop up and paralyze the outfit? I'm wild to have a finger in the pie?"

Julian was more self-contained and able to watch the progress of events, though he fingered the tremendous gun nervously, not entirely fancying the necessity that might compel him to fire it off at the risk of a dislocated shoulder; but, after all, Merriwether was the ring-master to this circus, and it was at the snap of his whip the trick horses must do their stunts, nor did the big ex-mate fail in his part.

This thrilling story of youthful adventures in the far East will be continued next week. Our patterns and cameras are free to all subscribers. Please note our announcement on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Links of Love and Gold.

(Continued from page eleven.)

did all that he could for her comfort.

Then to relieve her lonely hours, he continued his painting, and in ten days completed the portrait of the beautiful but unfortunate girl.

In those days spent with Bonnie Bessie, this universal genius became more and more in love with his fair model, and, carried away by his passion, he threw himself before her and begged that she would forget the past and live for him alone.

"If you will become my wife, Bessie," he said, earnestly, "I will give up all my evil associations, leave off all my bad habits, and we will go away from here, and day and night will I work for you. Say, yes, Bessie."

But Bonnie Bessie made no immediate reply; she arose and paced the room in deep thought, and then a baleful glare gradually crept into her eyes, while a smile of strange meaning hovered about her lips. At length, seating herself by the chair where he sat in deep thought, she said, in a voice that was husky with feeling:

"Ross Sherman, you say that you love me. Will you prove that love?"

"Indeed, I will; try me."

"I will try you; I will give you such a severe test that you will shrink from it."

"Never! What would you have me do?"

This remarkable story of love and folly and crime will be continued next week. All Ledger subscribers are entitled to our free cameras and patterns as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

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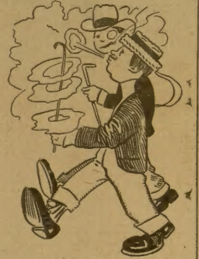

Bertie—How do you get on with Miss Sweetly, old chap?

Willie—Grand! The other night I asked her how she liked me and she said: "Out of sight."

Not What He Asked For.

Little Harold, aged 6, had been taught by his parents that the Lord would answer any prayer made to him and would grant any request within reason.

Now, Harold very much wanted a kitten and on going to bed one night he prayed long and fervently for the Lord to send him a nice little kitten. Then the sandman passed that way and Harold journeyed into the land of Blinken and Nod, where he doubtless played with cuddling little kittens until the dawn.

At any rate he awoke early. Sitting up in bed he rubbed his eyes and looked about for the kitten. At that instant a tiny mouse scampered across the floor and sat up near the side of his little bed.

"Oh, Lord!" ailed Harold, as he buried his face in a pillow and began to sob. "I thought I told you a kitten!"

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Pa—Flattery, my son, is the praise we hear bestowed upon other people.

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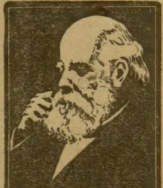
The secret of this mighty healing power, this vital life spark, this marvelous tonic fluid is known to me alone. It is mine to give to whom I will and my works go before me. Doubt not! I ask no man to believe me but I give to every weak man free this priceless boon and it restores him instantly to the strength and powerful vigor of youth. With this marvelous, mysterious compound, which I have discovered only after a lifetime devoted to search through all the realms of science, and the archives of the ancients, it is possible for every weak man to have for his own the glorious manly power, the untiring vigor and the long life of the patriarchs of Bible times. With this mysterious compound no weak man will ever again be troubled with impotency, vital losses, nightly emissions, spermatorrhea, varicocele, prematurity, defective power or lack of vital energy.



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Send me no money. It is my duty, guided by an Unseen Hand—it is my mission on earth—my life work—to lift up the fallen, heal the weak and cure the maimed or undeveloped; and to every man who has lost his vital power or finds it waning, I send my message of love and peace and health. I can save him and I will save him and restore him to many years of happiness and the impetuous vitality and vigorous manhood of perfect health and youth.

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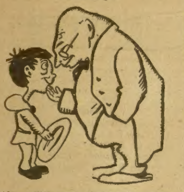

"Ah my little man, what are you going to do when you grow up?"

"Oh, sir, I am only a pickpocket now; but I hope to go to St. Louis and be a boodler some day."

Some Variety.

"She impresses me as a plain, everyday person," observed the visitor, referring to the daughter of the hostess.

"You are wrong in your impression," says the hostess. "Lizzie is not plain every day. She powders up and frizzes her hair so that she looks right peart on Sundays."

Thought Rabbits Were Lambs.

Among the help received by the Kansas farmers during the harvest season just closed was a young athlete from an Eastern college. He found work on a sheep ranch. He was the champion sprinter of his school, but he didn't know much about ranching. He was sent out the first day to herd the sheep. He came in at night so dead tired that he could hardly move one foot ahead of the other. When the rancher asked him how he got along he said all right, except that he had done a big lot of running to keep the lambs in the flock. "I kept them there," he said, "but, Lord, it made me run." ":Lambs?" said the rancher, in astonishment. "There are no lambs at this time of the year." "Well, there are, lots of them," said the new shepherd, stubbornly, "you just come out and see." Very curious to know what it all meant, the rancher went with the herder to the pasture. As they went along two jack rabbits jumped. "There!" shouted the herder; "there's two of 'em now; they must have got out since I went to supper."

Slow of Hearing.

On returning from an afternoon call, a lady who had forgotten her key was obliged to ring her own door bell. Nobody coming, she rang again. Still nobody. Finally at a louder, longer ring the servant made his appearance. "Pray, are you deaf?" inquired the lady, in none too pleasant a frame of mind.

"I'll beg your pardon, ma'am," said the servant, tranquilly, "but I only heard the third ring."

Just Like a Woman.

Mrs. Growells—Our servant has left.

Growells—Well, I'm glad of it. You were always complaining of her.

Mrs. Growells—Yes; but I'm afraid I'll never be able to get another who will furnish as much cause for complaint.

Getting Back at Him.

"Why is it?" asked the inquisitive man of the caramel-eating maid, "that you women are so fond of sweets?"

"While I'm trying to think of the answer," replied the fair one, "suppose you tell me why you men are so fond of 'sours.'"

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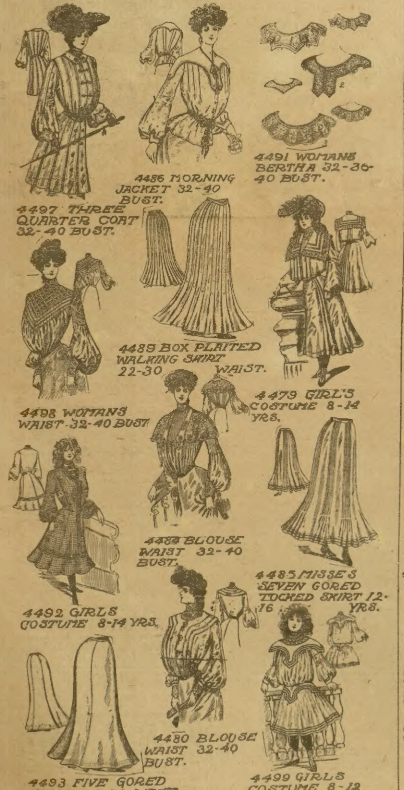
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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

Day Dreams.

"When I'm a man," said Johnny, "I'll be a sailor bold,
And I'll sail the mighty ocean in search of wealth untold.
And I'll build myself a castle with a fearful donjon keep,
And I'll have ten thousand vassals who will guard me while I sleep.

"Then I'll rescue some fair princess from a robber, don't you see?
And she will thank me sweetly and say she'll marry me;
And when I wed the princess I'll be a king, you know,
And I'll have a million subjects who will bow before me low!"

But while he was a-dreaming of the time that was to be,
The teacher asked him gently the simple rule of three;
Then his castle and his kingdom faded into air at once,
And the crown that fate decreed him was the tall cap of a dunce.
—April St. Nicholas.

Woods That Resist Fire.

Though there are a number of different kinds of wood, ebony, ironwood, etc, of such close, hard fibre that even the fiercest fire has difficulty in "getting hold" of it, there is only one sort, so far as now known, that is practically fireproof. This is a small, scraggy tree, a native of South America, called the shopala, with thick, tough, stringy bark, full of a sort of fire resisting sap. This curious shrub grows largely on the great grassy savannas, which are swept by fire almost every year during the heat of the summer. There it thrives splendidly, for the annual scourge only kills off its bigger and hardier competitors and leaves the ground free for the growth of this vegetable asbestos.

Schoolboy Wrangling.

A writer in the London Spectator says that there is no reason why an "argument" between schoolboys should ever come to an end. For this is its usual course:

"Yorkshire is the best county in England."

"No, it's not. Lancashire is."

"No, it's not."

"Yes, it is."

"I know it isn't."

"I know it is."

This exchange of assertion goes on until, possibly as the beginning of another argument, it comes to an end as abruptly as it started.

The most original dispute, however, took place when two little boys were contradicting each other, and an older lad tried to pour oil on the troubled waters by quoting, "It takes two to make a quarrel and one to end it."

"All right!" shouted a combatant. "I'll be the one!"

"No, you shan't!" yelled the other. "I will!"

Then a warm dispute followed, each claiming the distinction of being peacemaker.

A Forced Lie.

Bertie—It's very wrong, father, to tell a falsehood, isn't it?

Father—Of course, it is, my boy.

Bertie—And it's wicked to ask a boy to tell lies?

Father—Why, yes.

Bertie—Well, that's what my teacher made me do today.

Father—Goodness gracious! Made you tell a lie, Bertie?

Bertie—Yes; he made me promise always to be a good boy in the future.

What Tommy Takes.

By Elizabeth L. Gould.

That Tommy Todd could have a fault
Which all his friends condone
Is past belief, and yet 'tis said
He takes things not his own.
"He has his father's eyes," cries one,
"It's plainly to be seen!"
"His nose and mouth, though, Tommy took
Straight from his Grandpa Green."
"Our Tommy has his mother's hair,"
His aunts will freely say,
"His mother's forehead, too, you see,
Of course, that's plain as day!"
And many, many times a week
Of Tommy Todd 'tis said,
"We all know where he got that laugh!
From his poor Uncle Ned!"

Ted's Cause for Gratitude.

Ted, aged 4 years, whose home was on the wide prairie, was visiting his aunt in the Great Smoky Mountains. Never having walked before on rocky mountain roads, he had many falls. After one of these tumbles, he inquired, "Auntie, what does make so many stones here?"

To which she replied, "God put the stones here, Teddy."

"Well," he responded earnestly, after a little thought, "I'm very glad he didn't put so many stones in Illinois."

Her Definition of "Dogma."

A teacher is said to have experienced the following: After explaining the meaning of the word "dogma" to her pupils, she wrote it on the blackboard and asked her pupils to compose a sentence containing the word. One little girl, in too late for the definition, concluded to take part in the exercises nevertheless. Her sentence was as follows: "Our dogma has three puppies."

Out of the Mouths of Babes.

Little Lulu was gazing at the moon and stars one evening and after looking very intently for some time she added: "Mamma, are all those little bright things in the sky the moon's babies?"

—

"Why, Harry," exclaimed his mother, as she entered the pantry unexpectedly, "are you in that jam again?"

"No, mamma," answered the truthful urchin, "that jam's in me."

—

"Now, Willie," said the mother of a small invalid, "I want you to take this powder the doctor left for you."

"Powder!" exclaimed the little patient. "Why, I'm not a gun, am I?"

—

Little Johnny—Papa, where does a theory originate?

Papa—In a man's head, my son.

Little Johnny—And if one should explode would it blow his head off?

—

Small Elmer had been presented with a toy train of cars and insisted on taking them to bed with him when he retired.

"But that isn't the place for cars," protested his mother.

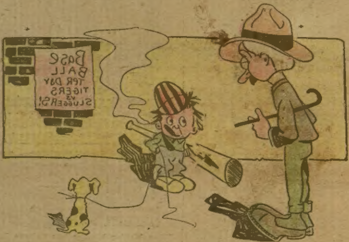
"Course it is," replied Elmer, "'cause they are all sleepin' cars."

Fair Warning.

One morning, when 5-year-old Elsie's patience had reached its limit in the tiresome process of dressing, she astonished her mamma by exclaiming, "Hurry, mamma! My tears are loose."

Price of Animals.

The lion is worth to the animal dealer $1,500; the lioness, $500; the leopard $300; the panther, $250; bears, $50 to $600; an elk, $200; the camel, $300, and the elephant $500.



"So the umpire stopped the game in the sixth inning? How was that?"
"Why, I busted our only bat on his head!"

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